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"We live in a used world": cultural geographies of American garage sales

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"WE LIVE IN A USED WORLD:" CULTURAL GEOGRAPHIES OF AMERICAN GARAGE SALES

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DEDICATION

Firstly, I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Catherine and Ronald Hanks, without whom this work would not be possible. I also dedicate this to my brother, Dr. Jason Hanks and all of my grandparents, with gratitude for all of their love and support along the way. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to those who love to keep and get rid of junk, treasures, stories, and memories.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to understand the emotional geographies of American garage sales, which I argue are liminal. Through a methodology of open-ended questionnaires, mental maps, participant-observation, and interviews, I make the case that garage sales, through absent and/or present items, narratives, and exchanged histories, can reveal much in terms of identity, values, and cultural practices. These archives on the margins hold stories, artifacts, and performances of a distant or near past, giving geographers an innovative lens through which to explore the intricacies of materiality, place, and representation. This thesis provides a range of theoretical and practical perspectives on how geographers conceptualize and utilize the archive, I expand on their understandings to include garage sales— ephemeral sites that inhabit a space not quite purposefully preserved and not yet necessarily in decay. Through questioning conventional understandings of the conventional archive, space for an alternative archive--including everydayness, the revelation of cultural and historical clues via consumed, retained, and divested 'things', access, context, performance, and narrative--becomes possible.

1. INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL GEOGRAPHIES OF AMERICAN GARAGE SALES

On June 26, 2009, I went yard saling with friends in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It was an unusual experience. My ex-partner of six years and I parted ways (and thus possessions) in April of 2009. I was not "allowed" to be at our mutual residence when she moved "her" things out. This partitioning of things was interesting, because while I could easily walk around my house and see what is there, it required imagination for me to see what wasn't "there" anymore. Since then, I had held my own yard sale, ridding my life of things that belonged to "us" or "her," distancing myself from that identity, along with the material objects that conjured up memories of that relationship. I needed to dissolve links to her and to our shared history.

Not long after, a good friend who was reading the online classified ads in our local paper, discovered that my ex-partner was having a yard sale. I debated whether I should go. I decided it was a unique occasion, one in which I could see what she was selling and what my relationship to any of it might be. Was any of it "mine" or "ours"?

Upon our arrival at the yard sale, my ex and her new partner quickly scurried inside the house. I perused the things, most of them unrecognizable to me. As I was trying to take in the mingling smells of the castoffs of my ex and her new partner, their mostly drab colors, the cacophony of participants talking and a vacuum cleaner being tested, I noticed a badminton and volleyball set. I had given it to her as a birthday present; it was once packaged neatly in its oddly shaped blue, plastic case. The case, riddled with scratches, spewed forth disheveled nets and racquets. I made my way around the carport and came upon a once brightly colored, woven hammock. It was faded now, from sun, from washing, from time. I immediately recognized this hammock, as we already had a relationship. While living in El Salvador with my grandparents, I had carefully picked it out after deliberating over its color and size at the Mercado de Artesanias in San Salvador, El Salvador. I moved back to the United States prematurely to be with my then partner.

The hammock was my gift to her, one we had used frequently while we lived together in Baton Rouge.

During the post-breakup process of sorting "stuff" we had an unarticulated system of deciding who got what. If a family member or friend had given one of us something, the corresponding recipient kept it. We also kept all presents we had exchanged with each other over the years without question. At that time, I wanted to ask for the hammock, but knew that I could not, as I had given it to her as a gift. Our stuff-division system involved an emotional economy; if I had purchased something at a yard sale, which required skill, thrift and time, I was able to keep it. This speaks to our personal-valuation systems, a comprehension of worth that acknowledges the extraeconomical. I was using money that was "ours" to purchase at yard sales. Contrarily, it did not function this way for the division of new items we had purchased at retail stores.

Back to the hammock: I picked it up, felt it and oddly enough it reminded of my papi (my grandfather). I wanted to buy the hammock, not because of its meaning in the context of my former relationship, but for the connection it had to my grandfather. It transported me back in time and space to El Salvador, when my grandfather would frequently fall asleep in hammocks for his ritual siesta. In addition to the good memories the hammock brought forth, it also roused feelings of guilt and of regret for cutting my time short with my grandfather to return to Louisiana. He died a couple of years after I'd left.

As I approached to pay, my ex partner's friend started to ask "don't I know you?" and was soon followed by a shocked look of recognition. I asked her how much the hammock was, as there was no price tag on it (other things at this sale had prices on them). She replied, "Five dollars." My friend (who had initially discovered the ad for the sale), standing by my side, quickly asked me in an obviously fake whisper, "Did you even pay that much for it the first time?" I paid five dollars for it at the yard sale that day; no "haggling" this time around. The American garage sale afforded the

opportunity to have a glimpse into my ex's life through the act of consumption—an interestingly un-intimate sharing of the personal. There are very few other opportunities to have such a private glimpse into the personal.[1] The only items that I recognized at that garage sale were things I had given her—things that I couldn't ask to get back, but could buy back.

As suggested by the anecdote above, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that interactions at American yard sales reveal emotional and material geographies of people and things-in-motion, and in particular how these temporary 'collections' in spaces of garage sales can inform geographic research.

What makes the preceding personal story relevant to cultural geography is how it reveals garage sales as complex events and spaces. The spatial and temporal aspects of garage sales allow for the unfolding of selves, alternative economic and social exchange systems, and understandings of geographical practices. My anecdote above illuminates how consumption and ridding of materiality in these spaces are inextricably linked to memory, value, emotion and identity. Admittedly, to some the hammock is nothing more than someone else's discarded item. But, the history of the hammock as it coincides with my own history, where it came from, and the sense of nostalgia it elicits confer upon it an additional (and inherently personal) level of value. Getting rid of the hammock held value both economically and as a vehicle to shed an aspect of the previous owner's former identity.

This is just one example that makes us think about "things" and garage sales differently. One person's "$5 hammock" is another person's valued memories. In addition, the above anecdote brings to the surface the embedded practices of consumption and ridding (sorting), the role of stuff in our lives, our roles in the lives of stuff and the way we perform our identities when encountering others, which will be explored in the chapters to come.

[1] Other opportunities, also associated with consumption, are real estate open houses and estate sales.

In this introduction, I will discuss the motivating questions of this research and situate American garage sales in discourses of cultural geography. As many iterations of garage sales exist, with categories that are typically spatially linked and often blurred, I will describe the use of particular phrases within the context of this work. I then offer a brief history of the American garage sale and its rise out of the middle class, mass production and capitalism, tracing its links to European and American flea markets as well as British car-boot sales. Next, I briefly mention pop-cultural significances to provide a context for media and artistic representations and perceptions of yard sales before and during the process of this project. Finally, I provide a discussion of methodologies, methods, and chapter descriptions.

1.1 Why Yard Sales?

I was introduced to and involved in yard sales during my childhood in southern Alabama. My mother and maternal grandmother took me to sales as a child, and as I grew older, I helped to host them. When I moved away for college to Baton Rouge, LA, I did not abandon what was for me, a social event. In fact, I was able to learn the city's geography through participating in yard sales. The more often I went, the more short cuts and neighborhoods I became familiar with.

But the act of yard saling has changed for me, not only regionally, but also technologically. In my earlier experiences yard saling, there was neither widely available Internet nor near universal cell-phone use. The plan-ahead routine of yard saling required picking up the local paper, getting the ink on your hands, and then transferring it to the map inadvertently. Recently, the extensive use of the Internet, for both classified advertising and maps, has changed the way many people approach hosting and attending yard sales. Today, I look up sales in the local paper online the night before and generate a Google map to route the most efficient way to attend the most sales. While in the car, I can navigate from place to place by looking at the blue dot on my iPhone. Admittedly, I still pride myself on place recognition and the ability to get around Baton Rouge with ease, due largely to

my frequenting sales throughout the city over the past 12 years. Since deciding to take this on as my thesis research topic, I have extended my participation to other regions. This practice has not only furthered my spatial awareness, but has also allowed me to understand perceptions of the areas I have visited as well as consider similarities and differences in the phenomenon of yard sales.

1.2 Timeline and Project Description

Formal and informal data collection for this project began in August 2009 continuing throughout 2010. I applied for and was granted exemption from oversight for this study by Louisiana State University's Internal Review Board (See Appendix C). To illuminate the interactions of people and things at garage sales and what they might reveal, I explored people's perceptions and feelings surrounding these events. I participated in the World's Longest Yard Sale in the summer of 2009 with my mother. We drove Highway 127 from Alabama to Ohio and back. During the four days of the event, we stopped at many homes, farms, and rented lots. In all, I have attended hundreds of yard sales. I observantly participated and took still pictures as well as wrote field and analytical notes throughout the research process. I used Baton Rouge, LA as a case study for this project. Throughout 2009 and 2010 I collected data on Saturdays (and very rarely Sundays) at garage sales in Baton Rouge, LA. I typically did not attend yard sales on the weekends of Louisiana State University football games, not because I am a football fanatic, but because people generally did not hold them on these weekends. Also, if I was out of town on a Saturday during my data collection period, I did not attend yard sales in Baton Rouge, but made an effort to attend yard sales in other locations whenever I could. In this thesis, I weave together various types of qualitative data (which will be discussed in the methods section later in this chapter) collected over a period of 14 months to discuss emotional and material geographies of American garage sales in regard to what they might reveal.

1.3 Defining

Several terms that I use throughout this thesis require some description or working definition. For the purposes of my research I use *garage sale* and *yard sale* interchangeably, as they are the most frequently used terms by participants in my experience. I acknowledge that there are geographically specific that vary from region to region. I use them as umbrella terms for estate sales held by family or community members (not external estate-sale companies, which are no longer solely associated with death), porch sales, rummage sales, apartment sales, patio sales, and condo sales, while recognizing these are different kinds of sales in different kinds of places. These events are largely labeled and defined by the spaces in which they are located; however, some are defined by the holder's purpose, such as a moving sale or a charity sale. A car-boot sale is another phenomenon associated with yard sales, but geographically occurs in the United Kingdom. The car-boot sale, as the name suggests, entails people gathering in various places to sell and buy goods out of the trunks of their cars and on the nearby ground (see Gregson, 1997).

I refer to them as American garage sales, not because the sale holders or sale goers are necessarily American, but because these sales are located in the United States. Some of my research sites were on private property, often in a periphery of a home, such as a yard, garage or porch. This leads me to the next word in need of defining—liminal.

The terms *liminal* and *liminality* come to geography through anthropologist Victor Turner (in Bial, 2004). Turner describes liminality as "necessarily ambiguous" (p.89) and liminal entities as "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention…" (p. 89).

I offer yards, garages, gardens, patios, driveways, sidewalks and homes, as liminal spaces (see Turner, 1979, Freidus and Romero-Danza, 2009, and Delaney, 2009). One example of how yard sales are liminal spaces deals with where yard sales take place—often on the threshold of public and

private, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I will discuss how yard sales are liminal spaces, owing to their existence between first-cycle retail and the trash dump, as well as how the liminal alternative economy of yard sales allows for various value-determination systems. These liminal qualities provide participants with personal glimpses into what makes up so much of our lives—materiality: how we utilize it, how we think about it, how we remember it, how we imagine our futures with it, how we perform ourselves with it, how we categorize it, and how we feel and talk about it.

Ridding, an important term I use throughout the following chapters, comes out of literature from British geographers Louise Crewe and Nicky Gregson (see Crewe, 1997 and Gregson and Crewe, 2007a). I employ this term as they do to mean *to get rid of* or *to divest*. I use it to refer to an act or process of dispossessing. According to Anthropologist Pauline Garvey's[2] review of Gregson's work (2010):

> Ridding then, is neither a linear nor a straightforward process. And the trajectory of things shows how certain practices of keeping and disposing are part of a narrative of self. Narrating self and social relations is frequently accompanied *not* by appropriating but through staggered removal or complete expulsion. The form that ridding takes therefore is of key importance in indicating how something no longer accommodates the home's residents. For example parents feel obligated to rank children's old toys according to emotional registers in addition to disposal practices. Sentimental investment in such possessions demands a conceptual shift in which objects are removed from the household, but not expelled. Moreover social identities are not only facilitated though ridding but constituted through the practice of on-going interaction with stuff. (p. 193)

Like Gregson and Crewe I discuss the idea of ridding in relationship to and as a part of consumption; however, while I view them as belonging together under the term consumption I tease them apart for the purpose of understanding how they work together as different parts of one process.

[2] http://www.scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/mar/article/viewArticle/896/1007

In addition to *liminal* and *ridding*, another pervasive term in this thesis is *ephemeral*. I use this word to mean fleeting, temporary. By describing people, things, or events as ephemeral in this thesis, I acknowledge and employ the causative meaning that they are never exactly reproducible, as in performances. Additionally, I utilize the word *ephemeral* with the understanding that everything is temporary, relatively speaking and so employ this idea on a continuum where some things, people, or events are more fleeting than others. My example of an ephemeral event, an American garage sale, typically lasts only several hours, possibly on consecutive days, but is never exactly reproducible with the same people, things, and performances, which brings us to *archives*, also existing on a continuum of ephemerality.

Archives, addressed in the final chapter of this thesis, also require a sorting-out. I want to make clear that I provide several definitions of archives from various scholars in Chapter 5. Keeping this in mind, I use the term at times to refer to actual physical or digital collections that researchers use, but at other times as an abstraction or idea in order to re-define and re-figure what places and spaces scholars utilize as archives.

To define the parameters of this research I include what this research is not. Throughout the process of my research, I have been asked, "but what about flea markets and thrift stores?" While recognizing a relationship among these events, I make a differentiation between garage sales, flea markets and thrift stores. I understand this difference to exist in several ways:

1. Yard sales are typically held by people who were connected to many of the material objects through family, friends, communities or their own use of the items, whereas the items at thrift stores, auctions and flea markets are often further removed from their owners or users and their owners' or users' communities.

2. Prices and locations are more ephemeral at yard sales, but locations and prices of thrift stores and flea markets are more fixed.

3. Flea markets and thrift stores are typically run by professionals, who pay for a space with the main intent of making a profit.

1.4 A Brief History of the American Garage Sale

Garage sales are largely discussed as rising out of economic conditions, initially either a result of mass production, mass consumption and thus the need to rid excess, or as a result of hard economic times necessitating a source of extra cash and/or savings (see Perdigo and Weiss, 2003). There are also spatially motivating factors to consider, which provide a conundrum—the expansion of suburbia (see Virgin, 2006), with larger spaces for *housing* more material goods, and at once motivated by the need to get rid of things to create more space (see Herrmann and Soiffer, 1984).

American garage sales have only existed since the middle of the 20th century, but share similarities with older events, particularly flea markets. As a practice, garage sales can be connected to flea markets. According to Word Detective columnist Evan Morris (1997):

> According to etymologist Christine Ammer, the first "flea market" may have been New York's raucous Fly Market, a fixture in Lower Manhattan from before the American Revolution until around 1816. The "Fly" came from the Dutch name for the market, "Vly" or "Vlie," which meant "valley," and was pronounced, you guessed it, "flea."…However, while the Fly Market certainly existed, and its name was evidently indeed pronounced "flea market," the actual origin of the term most probably lies in Paris, where Le Marche aux Puces (literally, "market of the fleas") was a popular shopping venue. Le Marche aux Puces took its name, as you might have guessed by now, from the semi-humorous (and probably at least partly accurate) popular perception that the market's ragtag goods were more than likely to be infested with fleas. In any case, "flea market" first appeared in English in the 1920's and is most likely a simple translation of the French market's name. If "flea market" had gained currency from the Manhattan "Fly Market," it almost certainly would have appeared in print much earlier than it did (Online column, 12/15/97).

Another Dutch link may include a market held at Waterlooplein. In 1893, just thirteen years after the creation of Waterlooplein, Amsterdam's Jewish community began the Waterlooplein Flea Market, which endured until the persecution of Jews began and was reanimated after WWII.[3] Whether the flea market came to us from the Dutch or the French (or both), there is no denying that the flea

[3] http://www.amsterdam.info/markets/waterlooplein

market as it exists today shares commonalities with American garage sales, particularly, consumption, ridding, material goods and space.

Anthropologist Gretchen Herrmann and sociologist Stephen Soiffer (1984) state that "the garage sale arises from American prosperity, from the ability of families to constantly replace domestic items" (p. 398), linking the yard sale to mass production—and mass consumption. As a very spatially linked practice, mass consumption lead to excess and simultaneously, it lead to *lack*. An excess of material items carried with it a lack of space[4].

Although the roots of yard sales may be traced to Europe, Historian Lori Verderame (2008) claims that the yard sale is "an American institution." Verderame suggests that "yard sales brought free trade to the front lawn. Initially, 1950s American suburbanites sold their wares in the self-proclaimed open-aire stores measuring from the threshold to the curb"(2008).[5]

The phenomenon of yard sales could be perceived as merely a microscale of capitalism or an obsession with shopping; however, it is more beneficial to understand moments, practices and acts of consumption as opportunities for a greater understanding of cultural attitudes, value-making systems, and people's spatial and emotional perceptions of their ever-changing relationships to and with people and things. The labels *garage sale* and *yard sale*, categorically defined in the context of a/the home, allude to a particular class—one that could afford to have more than what it needed, as well as either a yard to mow and/or the need for a garage to house a vehicle. These ephemeral events may have only made it to *the record* as an advertisement in the newspaper, but many were and are advertised through handmade and mass produced signs, which are also fleeting. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* columnist Bill Virgin (2006) cites a no longer available www.family.com article:

> In 1950s and 1960s America, increased affluence led many consumers to accumulate household goods in excess; concurrently, increased home-ownership created the venue from which to sell these goods. Suburbia became the fertile breeding grounds

[4] For a feminist discussion see Hayden, D. (1981).
[5] From an online yard sale advice blog: http://www.drloriv.com/advice/yardsaletips.asp

> of garage sales, where unwanted items found new homes at the hands of housewives. A postmodern adaptation of the mid-nineteenth-century charitable fair or bazaar, the garage sale tapped a national romanticism toward history and nostalgia for used goods. ... During the 1970s, garage sales exploded into mainstream consciousness, earning a permanent place in American iconography and legitimizing the concept of profiting from discarded goods.[6]

The general consensus among the sources I have utilized places the first American garage sales in the 1950s or 1960s. Along with discussing the time frame of garage sales' first appearance in physical and economic landscapes, they are poised in the context of corresponding fads and cultural attitudes. Authors Cathy Perdigo and Sonia Weiss (2003) suggest an economic and a cultural history:

> Garage sales have clearly been around for sometime [*sic*], but they made their presence known in a big way during the inflationary years of the late 1960s. As the power of the dollar dwindled, buying and selling used goods became an accepted way to make ends meet. It also appealed to the growing number of individuals who were questioning every facet of traditional society and creating alternatives to it. To the hippies and flower children of the 1960s, there was no shame in trading in used goods. In fact, many people during this period took great pride in finding items that they could put to good use, just like earlier generations had done during the [D]epression. By the time the economy leveled out in the 1980s, garage sales had become so popular that few questioned the reasons for having them or shopping at them. By this point, the other reasons for the popularity of garage sales—the social factor among them—had made these sales an indelible part of America's landscape. (p. 6-7)

The popularity of garage sales is evident in virtual realms of the Internet and television as well as in mass media. Having traced the origins of garage sales and their connections to past economies, economic perceptions, cultural attitudes, and practices helps illuminate the more current practices, perceptions, and attitudes regarding yard sales in this thesis as well as what they might reveal in terms of emotional and material geographies.

1.5 A Contemporary Context

While browsing the Internet and bookstores, I came across a vast array of "how to" literature, most of which gave advice on making the most profit, having the ideal display, determining value, and, occasionally, how to make the sale a community or family affair. In line with

[6] http://www.seattlepi.com/virgin/272019_virgin30.html

value determination, American pop culture is increasingly interested in the "old," the "rustic," the "valuable," and the "unknown treasure." Television, the Internet, and online and print journalism have contributed to a heightening awareness of garage sale Americana.

Television shows such as *American Pickers*[7] and *Pawn Stars* act as media stages for their male hosts to display economic savvy and historical know-how, and contribute toward a fetishization of "junk." The shows *Hoarders*" and *Hoarding: Buried Alive* fetishize and put on display the materiality, performance, and effects of hoarding and hoarding tendencies. What the four shows have in common is the mutual concern for the concepts of value, materiality as spatially formative and vice versa, consumption, retention, and ridding, as well as categorical hierarchies, both economic and symbolic. Additionally, all four shows largely take place within spaces concerning home. *American Pickers* goes to people's attics, garages, storage buildings, yards, and farms to dig through large quantities of material objects that have been accumulated, usually over a substantial duration of time. The two programs centered on hoarding typically show extreme cases in which people have requested an intervention, particularly concerning the home and its spatial status in relation to the amount of possessions, as well as health and safety risks. While it is worthwhile to discuss these shows in more detail, it is beyond the scope of this paper, other than to demonstrate that there is refraction and reflection of what motivates people to hold and attend yard sales and determine value of material items in a contemporary popular-cultural context.[8]

With sites such as eBay and Craigslist, the Internet has opened space for virtual garage sales. Several garage-sale apps have been developed for smart phones. Additionally, there have been

[7] A program preceded by the popular *Antiques Road Show*.
[8] Also during the processes of data collection, legislation was passed, which affects the legal dynamics of yard sales (See Kim Painter, 2008 and Diane Macedo, 2009), which relate to product recalls, federal safety standards and the sale of firearms.

several news stories that have piqued the public's interest in garage sales. There was the discovery, in July 2010, of Ansel Adams' photographs at a yard sale, as well as the bike of a famous cyclist.

Alan Duke (2010) explains that Rick Norsigian of Fresno, CA, purchased two boxes of photographs years earlier at a garage sale and stored them under his pool table.[9] He paid $45 for them at the sale, but as Duke reports, Ansel Adams experts have estimated the value of the photos at approximately $2 million. In the summer of 2010, Greg Estes bought a broken-down bicycle for $5 at a Kentucky yard sale that was part of the World's Longest Yard Sale, and it turned out to belong to Tour de France champion Floyd Landis, according to Molly Haines of *The (Owenton, KY) News-Herald.*[10] These stories have aided my understanding of how media representations "Disneyfy" (see Zukin, 1991) seemingly mundane cultural practices, such as yard sales, in the United States. They made me think about all of the stories at and about yard sales that did not make it to the mainstream media. Stories like these contribute to the treasure-hunt mentality prevalent in other literature published about yard sales (see Kincaid, 1997, Carbone, 2005, Schroeder, 2005, Harden, 2008, Augusts, 2011, and Hadlock, 2011) therefore furthering the Disney-fication of these events through their associations with treasure-hunting.

1.6 Situating the Research

I situate this work in landscape discourse, particularly within cultural geography. John Wiley (2007) describes landscape phenomenologies in cultural geography as having undergone "two revolutions … first the inrush of successive waves of insight from visual theory, critical theory, and poststructuralist thought… and second the advent of new phenomenologies of the body, materiality, perception and performance" (p. 186). I also emphasize temporality in this work; according to

[9] Duke, A. (2010, July 27). Experts: Ansel Adams photos found at garage sale worth $200 million - CNN. Retrieved April 18, 2011, from http://articles.cnn.com/2010-07-27/entertainment/ansel.adams.discovery_1_rick-norsigian-david-w-streets-garage-sale?_s=PM:SHOWBIZ

[10] http://www.lcni5.com/cgi-bin/c2.cgi?033+article+News+20100811103205033033001

Wiley, "temporality … is something quintessentially performed, enacted" (2007, p. 160). Wiley continues: "and so much in the same way as an ocular, disengaged vision of landscape is replaced by the kinesthetic involvement of dwelling, the linear universal time of history is replaced by temporality phenomenologically grounded in lived, corporeal experiences" (p. 160-161). I argue that American yard sales exist ephemerally because the locations where they are held, the people who attend, and the things for sale are fleeting and temporary. The sales typically occur within a finite time and on certain days. Yard sales are experienced in embodied ways, not only through vision, but are sensed through smell, touch and sound. Additionally, participation in these events requires a kinesthetic element for physically engaging people and things, for moving in and through these landscapes.

I frame the phenomenon of yard sales with geographer Hayden Lorimer's (2005) insight into shifting foci regarding phenomena:

> At first, the phenomena in question may seem remarkable only by their apparent insignificance. The focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions. Attention to these kinds of expression, it is contended, offers an escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgement [*sic*] and ultimate representation. In short, so much ordinary action gives no advance notice of what it will become. (p. 84)

The phenomenon questioned in this thesis, American garage sales, is not, I assert, at all insignificant, but does indeed provide insight through "shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions" (Lorimer, 2005, p. 84). The (un)shared experiences of desire, sorting, ridding, consuming, and storytelling; passing encounters with friends, family strangers, and (extra)ordinary things at American garage sales, offer creative openings for qualitative geographers' research.

1.7 Methodologies and Methods

I frame the part of the data from this thesis with Keith Woodward, John Paul Jones III, and Sallie Marston's (2010) methodology of site ontology. Their understanding of site ontology informs my research and provides an approach that allows for a less prescriptive[11] orientation for research. Woodward, Jones and Marston's approach requires a *where,* which is termed the *site*, whose sphere is described as "in no way limited to human doings but rather includes all participating bodies." The site, they state, "broadly reinterprets 'the social' to incorporate the totality of interacting materiality, regardless of whether it be human or not" (p. 274).

This methodology is particularly appropriate for conceptualizing American garage sales as sites and the interactions between human and nonhuman materialities at these sites, as it provides a geographic understanding and spatial layer including humans and beyond. Woodward, Jones, and Marston (2010) also note that "any series of processes are not exactly repeatable, but only approachable. … With regard to research, studying a site is about openness and encounter" (p. 276). Encounter is a methodological tool I relate to yard sales as *other*-encountering events. Although I did utilize somewhat prescriptive methods—narrative surveys and mental maps—I also integrated methods such as participant observation and ethnography, which were more conducive to "openness and encounter." Woodward, Jones, and Marston (2010) explain their inside-out method approach as "not about finding one's way out, but about worming around by way of experimentation, testing the various pressures and intensities that go into the site's composition" (p. 276). My *sites* of research, existing in different places and at different times, consisting almost always of new people and things, provided for experimentation and for understanding the frictions and interactions of these sites, themselves never repeatable.

[11] The narrative surveys and mental maps are prescriptive because I made them before arriving at yard sales and they asked the same questions or provided the same prompt in the case of mental maps, whereas participant observation and informal interviews allowed individualized questions during the encounters.

A "flat ontology" exists without hierarchical scale, because scale is socially constructed (Marston, Jones, & Woodward, 2005). In regard to data collection, Woodward, Jones, and Marston (2010) suggest:

> While flat ontology may not of necessity require new methods of collecting "data"—like other contemporary perspectives it might combine qualitative work based on observation and participation, discussion and listening, mapping and close-reading—it does suggest that researchers assume different methodological stances with respect to the investigative process (p. 276).

Following their approach, I started from the inside moving outward, rather than from the outside moving inward. I moved in and through these events and spaces with some questions in mind, but allowed them to evolve because, as mentioned earlier, "so much ordinary action gives no advance notice of what it will become" (Lorimer, 2005, p. 84). Keeping this in mind, I tried to be open to encounters through widely used methods such as participant observation and its spontaneous informal conversations, which were sometimes initiated by other participants and other times by me. Woodward, Jones, and Marston (2010) note that "the challenge is how to think methodologically from the inside, following the intensities that enroll events and objects as well as the researcher her/himself" (p. 274). These methodologies reflect my overall approach to my research in that there was not something "out there" in the "field" that I was going to collect in particular (with the exception of narrative surveys and mental maps). Rather, I was open to chance encounters and allowed additional questions to form as part of the research process and not merely a precursor to it.

1.7.1 Ethnography

One method I used, ethnography, which came to geography via anthropology, "is a research strategy used to understand how people create and experience their worlds through processes such as place making, inhabiting social spaces, forging local and transnational networks, and representing and decolonizing spatial imaginaries" (Watson and Till, 2010, pp. 121-122). I not only used methods that are traditionally thought of as ethnographic, such as recorded and non-recorded interviews and

focus groups, but also what Cook and Crang (2007) describe as "disparate bits of 'data' made through odd conversations, first-hand experiences, fact-finding, referrals, collected bits of paper, sketching, photography, web-searching, reading…multiple forms of transcripts, statistics, textual and visual materials, research diary notes, and so on" (pp. 131-132). Throughout the research process, I relied on most of the aforementioned as ethnographic material for this thesis.

I employed Watson and Till's (2010) understanding of ethnography as "an intersubjective form of qualitative research through which the relationships of researcher and research, insider and outsider, self and other, body and environment, and field and home are negotiated" (p. 121). In each ethnographic approach I used and throughout the research process, these negotiations were present, whether apparent or acknowledged, or neither.

1.7.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation carries with it a tension between categories of subject and object, which often become muddled because while we participate and observe, certainly we are observed. However, the categories of subject and object are always changing; observing is admittedly a form of participation; and one cannot participate without observing (or perceiving through other senses). I participated observantly in yard, garage, rummage, and family-run estate sales at different sites and different times in the United States.

Participant observation provides the prospect of physically, emotionally, and critically being "there," As Woodward, Jones, and Marston (2010) contend, "working with 'what is at hand' reinforces the notion that the site is a processual bricolage of dynamic, continuous change, the relative consistency of which is not an issue of maintaining an ideal form or structure, but rather relatively cohering within varying conditions" (p. 276). This research did not include a singular study site, but was a multi-sited project.

Because this project was comprised of intermittent encounters and varied geographic sites, I utilize Mike Crang and Ian Cook's understanding of participant observation, which challenges conventional notions of this method (2007):

> Contrary to its traditional image, then, participant observation research is not always a matter of spending a year or two living in an isolated community in some remote part of the world. Many of us live segmented lives, embedded in different networks of family, leisure, and work. Thus, most 'communities' formed within these networks are spatially dispersed, and many are occasional or intermittent (p. 39).

Participating in and observing the loosely defined and fluid understandings of yard-saling "communities" was, as Cook and Crang described, not a steady, prolonged interaction, but disjointed and sporadic. At the World's Longest Yard Sale (WLYS), a larger-scale event, I was engaged with the yard saling communities for four straight days, whereas the rest of the data I collected was on Saturdays throughout the year (and an occasional Sunday).

1.7.3 Narrative Surveys

When approaching participants to fill out the narrative surveys, I introduced myself as a graduate student from Louisiana State University and said I was studying yard sales for my thesis in geography. In regard to narrative surveys, education scholar, Asher Shkedi (2004) suggests a need for qualitative methods amenable to larger populations—the narrative survey:

> While detailed individual narratives, gathered during in-depth interviews, are an important source of data, we sometimes need to survey narratives of large populations if, perhaps, less deeply. The question is not which is the correct research approach, but, rather, what are the researchers' assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon under inquiry and what questions are being asked. Those who adhere to the assumptions of the narrative-constructivist research approach are thus in need of a method to survey the narratives of large populations (p. 89).

I collected narrative surveys, as this approach was appropriate for the large populations and communities that host and attend yard sales, particularly the World's Longest Yard Sale because as Shkedi claims "[t]he narrative survey strategy is an attempt to integrate the study of the particular with the needs for comprehensive coverage of larger populations and a broader basis for formal

generalization" (p. 91). Narrative surveys are open-ended questionnaires, which provide space for longer answers. They are not surveys that are comprised of only[12] multiple choice, true/false, a hierarchical ranking system, or yes/no questions.

Narrative surveys are admittedly limited. They prohibit generative discussions and can generally only be completed by those who are literate or are familiar with reading and writing in English. On the first day of the World's Longest Yard Sale in August of 2009, I read aloud the questionnaire to a participant, who was unable to read it, and recorded his answers on the paper with a pen. The excitement in his voice and eager smile on his face when I began discussing yard sales with him revealed that he wanted his opinion to be known, but he quickly admitted he would not be able to read or fill out the questionnaire. With a deep sigh, he seemed somewhat relieved when I offered to ask him the questions and write his answers. This example somewhat blurs the categories of interview and narrative survey.

There are strengths to the narrative survey. I chose to use narrative surveys rather than traditional surveys in order to elicit richer and more in depth answers than would be possible with limited answer possibilities on a traditional survey. Another strength of the narrative survey is the opportunity for people who are uncomfortable in interview situations or have social anxiety to contribute information. I was conscious to not hover over participants as they completed the surveys. The directions encouraged them to skip questions they did not want to answer. The narrative survey provided participants with the opportunity to share stories without any foreseeable negative consequences. I engaged with several participants who wanted my contact information because they were interested in the project, but I refrained from collecting names and contact information on the narrative surveys. Narrative surveys provided an opportunity for those who are reluctant to do interviews by enabling them to communicate through writing.

[12] Narrative surveys may contain some questions that are not open-ended. My WLYS narrative survey (as seen in Appendix A) contains two multiple-choice questions.

For the most part, people were eager to participate by filling out the narrative surveys. Very few people declined. Of those that did decline, many were male. They declined to fill out the narrative survey and mentioned that their girlfriend, wife, or partner was already doing it as justification or suggested that I give it to their female companions instead of them. One man on the WLYS said "I would just give the same answers as my wife, so I don't need to do it."

1.7.4 Mental Maps

Mental mapping, also termed cognitive mapping, and mental-map reading are used in geography as well as in the field of psychology (see Evans et al., 1980; and Downs, 1977). Geographers Peter Gould and Rodney White (1986) have used and written about mental maps extensively. I chose to use this method because as Gould and White claim, "Differences between the attributes of 'here' and 'there' have always been of great interest to human geographers, because it is precisely the differences between places that generate movements of goods, people, and information" (p. 15). I collected more than 50 mental maps from participants in Baton Rouge, LA, and at the WLYS, attempting to get at perceptions and understandings of spatial relationships, and of categories and (dis)organization of yard and garage sales. I gave participants written directions (orally reading the promt, if necessary) to draw or commit to paper the layout of the space in which they were. The directions allowed for optional labeling and assured that there were no "right" or "wrong" maps. A few participants required extra explanation and I answered questions, while trying to not lead them in any particular direction. These mental maps were also useful in motivating participants who may have preferred a drawing activity as opposed to undergoing an oral interview. Conversely, some participants were reluctant to draw, expressing this by belittling their artistic skills.

Fewer participants agreed to draw mental maps than did answer the questions on the narrative surveys. Some people were eager to draw the mental maps, whereas many were hesitant. The practice of asking and answering questions, which regularly occurs at yard sales is more familiar

and therefore put people more at ease; however drawing or creating visual representations at yard sales is less expected and therefore a less comfortable practice, which affects people's willingness to do so.

Mental maps were not used in any of the research I draw from about yard sales or car-boot sales. I wanted to not merely reproduce work that has already been done, but attempt a bold experiment to offer a unique contribution to this body of work. While reflecting on this method of data collection, I came to the conclusion that it would be worthwhile to conduct interviews with the mapmakers. Additionally, it would have been perhaps more beneficial to request maps of not only the yard sales, but of their contexts in terms of areas or communities in which they were held.

1.7.5 Focus Groups

I chose to hold focus groups away from the actual yard sales in order to provide a collaborative discussion of yard sales in a setting that was less chaotic for recording and taking notes. I employed this method because as geographers Fernando J. Bosco and Thomas Herman (2010) suggest, "focus groups are compatible with a socially embedded form of research that participants have to offer and that has potential to bring more transparency to the process of knowledge production" (p. 194) and because "focus groups can be used for reflexive, collaborative, and participatory geographic research" (p.194).

I held two focus groups at my house. Both groups consisted of friends and acquaintances. Some participants were people whom I had invited while at yard sales and other participants were friends and their partners. The first group consisted of six people and the second group was comprised of five people. This method provided different information than interviews at yard sales because it more easily allowed me to get at memories and stories of past yard sales.

1.8 Analysis

Cook and Crang (2007) describe analysis as "another stage in an ongoing critical and creative research process that takes place in another part of the project's 'expanded field.' It's not that separate a stage that takes place in a detached space. It's a connected and connective process" (p. 133). During the analysis stage, I noted repeating themes of differences and similarities among the various types of data to create conceptual categories for each type, as well as categories that overlapped.

I thematically coded the answers on the narrative surveys and the transcripts from the interviews and focus groups as well as my field notes. For this project, I scanned, inventoried, and coded each map thematically. I analyzed and coded what was present in/on the mental maps and also coded the labels used on each map and noted styles of mapping. I then was able to analyze what did not appear on some of the maps based on what was present on other maps.

1.9 Getting Myself Situated

Like geographer Nicky Gregson (2007), I acknowledge the utilization of the body as a research tool and the necessity not only of observing acts of doing, but also that of positioning one's self in the enactment of doing. I actively engaged in the "doing." I bought, sold, and exchanged material goods as well as the symbolic and narrative, through listening to and telling stories. I actively listened to the interactions at and about yard sales. Cultural and historical geographer Dydia DeLyser (2010) also highlights the researcher as research tool, stating, "the researcher uses her- or himself as a 'research instrument'—collecting data, but also filtering feeling, experiencing, and analyzing field experiences and challenging personal understandings" (p. 4). As noted earlier, the researcher is a research tool, involved in and sifting through methods, methodologies, and analyses, and thus deserves mention in terms of positionality—my particular situatedness and occupancy of liminal spaces (possibly imagined, such as between the *field* and *academy*), insider/outsider and researcher/recreational yard saler.

This essence of moving through states of in-betweeness, mentioned above, certainly applies to my roles as researcher, yard saler, and my multiple identities based in difference, which are in constant flux and negotiation. Geographer Heidi Nast (1994) describes how, as researchers or participants, we define ourselves and are defined through difference:

> Betweenness highlights the fact that we can never *not* work with "others" who are separate and different from ourselves; difference is an essential aspect of all social interactions that requires that we are always everywhere in between or negotiating the worlds of me and not-me … negotiating various degrees of difference—be they based on gender, age, class, "race," sexuality and so on. Betweenness thus implies that we are never "outsiders" or "insiders" in any absolute sense (p. 57).

Throughout the project, I negotiated my fluid identities, which allowed me to move among and between different social situations and thus spaces; however, I was not always able to do so without challenge, which is exemplified in the opening story of this thesis. How I identify and how others identify me is situationally dependent. During the research process, change played various roles in regard to identity, including shifts back and forth between subject/object. For example, sometimes I was an audience member for the stories told by participants, and other times they were an audience for mine.

I not only learned to adapt my shifting roles, but also to varied audiences because, as Crang and Cook (2007) advise, "It is important to recognise that research projects have multiple audiences and are changing entities in time and space" (p. 41). Explanations of my project changed according to my audience, with briefer versions given at many yard sales (particularly to someone who was trying to find a treasure or bargain in five minutes or less). In Baton Rouge, I was more likely to re-encounter habitual garage-salers week after week, whereas during the four-day, multistate World's Longest Yard Sale, it was less likely for me to encounter the same people on different days. In Baton Rouge, I encountered "the regulars" and fellow yard salers labeled me as "that girl who studies yard sales."

Crang and Cook (2007) suggest "researchers' changing relationships and identities are, of course, wrapped up in changing research processes" (p. 42) and that "while these 'lines of identification' may be useful, possibly multiple and can develop some depth over time, they may also be fleeting, limited and (unexpectedly) subject to change" (Narayan, 1993, p. 43). Many of the relationships and dynamics I experienced while participating in garage sales in my hometown did develop over time, whereas they were much more fleeting at the World's Longest Yard Sale. I held various changing relationships to the participants in this research, as some were/are strangers, acquaintances, friends, or family members. Over the years, many friends and family members have gone yard-saling with me, or I with them, and have certainly affected the ways in which I negotiate my identities, shaping my experiences.

1.10 Chapter Descriptions

Many of the themes that I will address in this thesis are overlapping and linked. Concepts of liminality and liminal space, for example, play a role in Chapters 2 and 3. I discuss discursive storytelling in Chapter 2 and mental maps as metaphorical storytelling in Chapter 4. Physical and symbolic consumption and ridding are pervasive themes throughout these chapters as well as liminality.

Chapter 2 examines the *where*, *when*, and *how* of garage sales and integrates geographical work dealing with the themes of liminal, domestic, and public/private[13] spaces. I argue that garage sales occur in liminal spaces between domestic spaces of home and public spaces of consumption. In this chapter I focus on consumption and ridding at and from the home through American garage sales. I argue that sorting is an integral part of consumption and ridding. As a necessary part of consumption and ridding, sorting is therefore also necessary to garage sales. I link the acts of sorting

[13] Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006) provide a critique of past oversights in regard to the home as a realm worthy of study, which is attributed to its dominant association with the domestic, and therefore with women.

to memory and storytelling, which in part reveal our relationships to our things and these relationships affect our spatial practices. I look to consumption not as something to be demonized, but as an opportunity for understanding choices and the material consequences of those choices, which, as the thesis's opening anecdote suggests, are often intertwined with emotional geographies. I weave together stories and quotations from interviews, narrative surveys, and the focus groups that relate to the processes of consuming, ridding, and sorting.

Next, in Chapter 3, I again employ liminality as a concept, but in regard to the space between first-cycle consumption and the rubbish bin. I propose that this liminal consumption and ridding space allows for various expressions of the self. This chapter considers how these complex events and spaces reveal cultural geographies of identity performance. I discuss how they provide opportunities to encounter others and perform various expressions of self. These encounters with others (human and nonhuman) allow for both the perpetuation of already existing, dominant social constructs, and the opportunity to challenge them or confront them. I focus on a few of many ways that expressions of the self manifest, such as through personal systems of value determination, motivations for attending or holding yard sales, and understandings of difference and diversity.

In the fourth chapter I present a brief background on mental mapping, how mental maps are made, and why they are relevant. I then discuss research on how the mental maps I collected reveal personal biases and understandings of categories, as well as reproduce the home in a liminal space such as the yard. I give a description of the maps and then move into analysis of the various elements, such as borders, shapes, and text. I use the presence of items on some maps to suggest absences of items on other maps. Additionally, I use the mental maps as a metaphor for storytelling to understand smaller-scale stories told by the maps and thus the map-makers.

In Chapter 5, I briefly revisit themes from Chapters 2 through 4 and discuss American garage sales as events and spaces worthy of attention. By drawing a parallel between yard sales and

archives, I am able to connect both yard sales and archives with domestic spaces. To legitimize this parallel, I engage literature that problematizes traditional archives and geographical literature to highlight not a solution to these problems, but other ways to understand what other resources and sites are knowledge-producing.

The intersections of the ideas in geographical and performance literature in relation to archives and my empirical data from American garage sales allow for a blurring of field and archive. I bridge the gap between traditional and unconventional archives with work from geography and performance studies because "by taking performance studies seriously as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge, performance studies allows us to expand what we understand by 'knowledge' " (Taylor, 2003, p. 16). Including the ephemeral (that which is fleeting) as well as ridded materiality in archival practice and discourse can change the ways archives are utilized, accessed, and conceived. In order to make this case, I argue for archives that are not as predicated on retention and fixity, nor as focused on documents and text. I then conclude this thesis with a discussion of how my work contributes to geography.

2. HOME: CONSUMPTION, RIDDING, AND STORYTELLING

The following transcript is from the 1985-1992 television sitcom *The Golden Girls*[14]. In this scene, from the first-season episode "Blind Ambitions,"[15]a garage sale takes place in the driveway of the house shared by the show's main characters, fellow senior citizens Blanche, Sophia, Dorothy, and Rose. Their motivation for holding the garage sale is to earn money for a new TV for the home. This episode provides an example—albeit a fictionalized one—of how memories are conjured through ridding and consumption, and conveyed through storytelling in the context of a private home opened to the public.

Customer 1 [*to Sophia*]: So how much?
Sophia [*to Customer 2, sarcastically*]: Two bucks. Get wild. Treat yourself.
Customer 1 [*to Sophia, matter-of-factly*]: Nah, I'll give you $1.50.
Sophia [*to Customer 1, sarcastically*]: What does this look like … Baghdad? [*angrily*] Get the hell out of here!
Dorothy [*to Sophia*]: Ma, that's no way to sell things.
Sophia [*to Dorothy, sarcastically*]: Hey, go to Neiman Marcus sometime, see if they treat you any better.
Blanche [*to Dorothy*]: How we doing?
Dorothy [*to Blanche, exasperated*]: Honey, I don't think we've sold a thing.
Blanche [*to Dorothy, confused*]: I don't get it.
Customer 2 [*to Blanche*]: I'll give you $1 for these Elvis Presley salt-and- pepper shakers.
Blanche [*to Customer 2, dramatically*]: I will have you know the day I bought these salt-and-pepper shakers at the Graceland gift shop, I thought I saw the King himself walk by eating a giant chili cheeseburger and drinking a 36-ounce Dr. Pepper. Turned out it was an impersonator, but these are still very special mementos, and parting with them is an extremely painful sacrifice on my part.
Customer 2 [to Blanche, unwillingly]: Buck and a quarter.
Blanche [*to Customer 2, angrily*]: $1.25? Sir, if that is the kind of respect you have for genuine Elvis memorabilia, then I kindly suggest you hand these over and remove yourself from my property.
Dorothy [*incredulously*]: : Blanche! Blanche, I can't believe that you did that! I mean, they're just a silly salt-and-pepper shaker!
Blanche: The King is gone, Dorothy, but we must cherish the things he left behind. His movies, his songs …
Dorothy [*to Blanche, sarcastically*]: … and his seasonings?
[*Dialogue between Customer 3 and Rose omitted*]
Dorothy [*to Blanche and Rose, defeated*]: I mean what's the use of having a garage sale if we can't part with anything?

[14] Storyline by John W. Hale: "The Golden Girls is based on the lives and interactions of four older women whom have all been divorced/widowed, and are now roommates. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088526/
[15] Originally aired on NBC on March 29, 1986. *Blind Ambitions* was written by Robert Colleary and Susan Harris and directed by Terry Hughes.

Customer 4 [*to Dorothy*]: How much for this hockey stick?
Dorothy [*to Customer 4, sternly*]: Eleven hundred dollars.
Blanche [*shocked*]: Dorothy!
Dorothy [*to Customer 4 and Blanche, authoritatively*]: This isn't an ordinary hockey stick. Bobby Hull used this. This is a piece of history!
Blanche [*to Dorothy and Customer 4*]: It's a piece of junk, and the price tag says $4.
Dorothy [*to Customer 4*]: $4.50.
Customer 4 [*to Dorothy*]: OK. I'll take it.
Dorothy [*to Customer 4, sneakily*]: Uh, OK, but listen. Before you go, uh, come into the house with me. I'll show you the kind of wood oil that I use on it.
Blanche [*to Rose, dubiously*]: Wood oil? Are you buying that?
Rose [*to Blanche, naively*]: Course not. Everybody knows you use paraffin wax on parched wood.
[*Dorothy and Customer 4 are inside the house, physically struggling over the hockey stick*]
Dorothy [*to Customer 4, loudly*]: $6!
Customer 4 [*to Dorothy, firmly*]: No!
Dorothy [*to Customer 4, desperately*]: I'll give you 10.
Customer 4 [*to Dorothy, sternly*]: No, I don't want to sell it back!
Dorothy [*to Customer 4, exasperatedly*]: I'll give you 25, and don't ever show your face around here again!
Customer 4 [*to Dorothy, contentedly*]: Sold!
[*Blanche and Rose enter the house and come upon Dorothy and Customer 4*]
Dorothy [*to Blanche and Rose, sheepishly*]: Uh, he didn't want it. He said there's a nick in it. We have to have a return policy.
Blanche [to Rose and Dorothy]: Oh, girls, listen. Let's face it. All that so-called junk out there has too many fond memories for all of us. We're never going to be able to part with it.
Dorothy [to Rose and Blanche]: We might just as well call this whole garage sale off.

This chapter seeks to address the *where, what,* and *how* of American garage sales. Where do they take place and why does it matter? What do the processes and things necessary for yard sales reveal? How are they revealed? In order to address these questions, I integrate already existing geographical frameworks of consumption and ridding (material and symbolic) throughout the chapter.

After briefly addressing the *where, what,* and *how*, which include pictures and yard sale advertisements, I will mention various ideas of home, drawing from literature in geography, anthropology, and performance studies. Next, I will focus on how they relate to yard sales by providing stories from individual[16] and focus-group interviews,[17] observations from participation,

[16] I used pseudonyms for individuals whom I interviewed and for the second focus-group participants, as well as pseudonyms for people mentioned in their interviews.

and quotations from narrative surveys.[18] The empirical data will deal with home as a liminal space and context for most garage sales—hybridized public and private sites.

2.1 Where

I argue that most yard sales are held in liminal spaces—on a threshold of public and private space. In the teleplay excerpted above, the liminal space is Blanche's driveway. American garage sales typically occur within spaces associated with home—front yards and backyards, porches, garages, stoops, driveways, sidewalks, and sometimes even inside the home. These spaces, particularly during yard sales, possess public and private spatial qualities.

In the opening excerpt, Dorothy takes Customer 4 from the driveway into her house. Dorothy takes the money from the customer for the hockey stick while still in the liminal space in the driveway, yet invites Customer 4 into the privacy of her home to purchase it back from him. This transaction then extends the yard sale further into the private realm of the home. The sale in the anecdote is not intended to take place in the home; however, many sales do. Describing *where* yard sales take place can reveal conflations of spaces; for example, the following classified advertisement, Figure 2.1, advertises an "Indoor Yard Sale!" Assuming the sale-holder does not have an indoor yard, the sale-goers have been invited inside.

Address	City ▲ ▼	Date/Time	Send	Save	Map
1310 Pulaski Pike Add to Driving Tour	Huntsville	Fri. & Sat, 8-2	Send	Save	Map
Indoor Yard Sale! 1310 Pulaski Pike. Fri & Sat. 8a-2p. HH goods, appl. electronics, light fixtures, clothes. More Info Published in *The Huntsville Times* 4/21. Updated 4/21.					

Figure 2.1. Indoor Yard Sale Classified[19]

[17] The first focus-group participants chose to be identified by their initials.
[18] I did not ask for names on the narrative surveys.
[19] From the online classifieds of *The Huntsville Times*. April 21, 2011. http://classifieds.al.com/?orig_prop=al.com&property=al.com&temp_type=browse&category=results&tp=ME_bama&classification=Garage-Yard%20and%20Estate%20Sales

Figures 2.2 and 2.3, photos taken at the same yard sale during the World's Largest Yard Sale (WLYS) in Kentucky, also invite the sale-goers inside, not through a classified ad, but through the use of signs.

Figure 2.2. Yard Sale.
Photograph by author

Figure 2.3. More inside.
Photograph by author

Another classified ad, Figure 2.4, shows how people describe *where* their yard sales are and how to get to them. This classified for a sale in New Orleans directs sale-goers to "USE SIDE GATE TO BACKYARD" and tells them the sale is both "INSIDE & OUTSIDE."

EPIC SALE of AWESOME RETURNS

Category: Garage & Yard Sales - Garage & Yard Sales
Views: 13

Description

5924 MAGAZINE STREET-USE SIDE GATE TO BACKYARD,INSIDE&OUTSIDE.ART!,books,House stuff,Antiques,Toys,tons more SAT4.16.7am-11am&SUN4.17 10a-2p

Figure 2.4. Inside and Out. [20]

[20] From the online classifieds of *The Times Picayune*. April 17, 2011. http://classifieds.nola.com/?orig_prop=nola.com&property=nola.com&temp_type=browse&category=results&tp=ME_nola&classification=Garage-Yard%20and%20Estate%20Sales

Figure 2.5, a picture taken in Baton Rouge, LA, is another example of how spaces are conflated. While garages and carports do both provide spaces for vehicles, they are different. Garages are typically enclosed, while carports are often open on at least one side with an overhead covering. This illustrates a similar point to Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.5. Garage Sale in Carport.
Photograph by author

The preceding figures show how yard sales involve various parts of the home as a structure, but also *home* as concept. They illustrate the broad uses of phrases that are spatially linked to describe places other than the ones to which they are linguistically or conceptually attached for the sake of convenience.

2.2 What

The *what* of garage sales are the things, the people and memories. Blanche's Elvis-themed souvenir salt-and-pepper shakers exemplify what *things* do (often beyond what their makers, users, or owners intended for them to do) in our lives—connect us to other people, places, and times. To prepare for and put on a yard sale and rid things, one must sort these things, and consequently

memories, however minute. As I will show in this chapter, when consuming at a yard sale, the things, smells, and sounds can also educe memories and connect people, places, and times.

2.3 How

Within these liminal spaces emotions, stories, and goods flow. As I will show, in these spaces stories circulate, even those of questionable authenticity, and reveal memories and sentimental attachments we have to things. Dorothy's hockey stick in the example above indicates how yard sales are spaces in which storytelling becomes a means to rid things from our homes, and simultaneously a means to keep things in our homes. The *how* of yard sales for this thesis refers to how remembering near and distant pasts, triggered by our now-present things; and imagining our futures with new-to-us things, as well as the futures of our things, allows for storytelling. American yard sales are one way that participants consume for their homes and rid from them.

2.4 Home, Consumption and Ridding

Literature from anthropology, geography, and sociology concerning home, consumption, and ridding, along with the idea of liminality, forms the theoretical framework for this chapter. Anthropologist Daniel Miller (2002) suggests that "much of contemporary consumption is concerned with the home either as the object of consumption or as the setting for the arrangement and use of commodities" (p. 239). Since homes are consumable and sites of arrangement and (non)utilization for consumed items, the physical and imaginary space of the home is in constant flux. The desire for space and imaginings of future consumption are catalysts for the recommodification and reconsumption of objects.[21]

According to geographer Juliana Mansvelt (2005), geography is important in this context "not just because consumption takes place in space, but because space is produced through

[21] I acknowledge that financial motivations exist as well, but those are also ultimately linked to future consumption and therefore space.

consumption" (p. 56). The home is very much produced through and by practices of consumption and ridding.

According to sociologist John Urry (2005), "places are centres of many material activities, including the purchase and use of goods and services … and many places across the globe are being restructured as places of consumption" (p. 79). The home is one such place. It is a site of consumption as seen in the phenomenon of yard sales.

Feminist scholars have brought to light the hybridized space that homes occupy materially, as imagined representations and signifiers (Massey, 2005; and Marston, 2004). "Home is neither public nor private but both," argue geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006, p. 27). Blunt and Dowling conceptualize the home as a "*spatial imaginary*: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places" (p. 2). In addition to the aforementioned concept, I employ Gregson's (2007) notion that "along with the acts of acquisition, holding, keeping, and storing, acts of ridding things are centrally implicated in the fabrication of homes" (p. 160). In the *Golden Girls* transcript, we can see that when we are ridding possessions, we are faced with our varied attachments to them. Dorothy was motivated initially to get rid of the hockey stick based on the future consumption of a television for the creation of a sense of home. Consumption and ridding are often times inextricably linked and happen concurrently (Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe, 2007); one often affords the other, particularly when considering American garage sales as an example. Consumption, as Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe suggest, is bound up with ridding.

American homes are often the settings for garage sales. The space of the home, both private and public, provides a space for consumption and ridding, and consequently for displays of emotion

and memory in the form of storytelling[22]. The people and things that make up homes, either by their inclusion or exclusion, are opened to a public audience. The presence of an audience, garnered by various forms of invitation to the home, is critical for both the consumption and ridding of things and stories at yard sales.

Homes are spaces where material culture, consumption, imagination, and emotion converge and intertwine with the processes of remembering and forgetting (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). I argue that the preparation for and events of yard sales conjure memories and emotions, which are conveyed through storytelling. In this chapter, I will include stories that reveal emotions and imaginations at work in the spatial, social, and imagined context of the home, and discuss how they link people and places to the present, past, and future through consumption.

2.5 Consuming and Ridding the Past in the Present for the Future

Consumption and ridding contain embedded practices, both emotional and embodied. The act of consumption (which includes ridding)[23] ultimately requires the practices of physically sorting and therefore emotionally sorting. When in the ridding phase of consumption, a person holding a yard sale must sort through material items, a process which evokes memories of the items' roles in the past, present, and future, as well as memories and attachments to other people, places, and experiences. Consuming at yard sales requires one to participate in the act of sorting according to personal taste, need, and function, often requiring imagination—imagining a place for and a future with or without the potentially consumed item.

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[22] Gretchen Herrmann (1996) has noted that "frequently, shoppers tell stories about items purchased from individuals who have touched their lives, in however small a way" (p. 717) and primarily associated the storytelling aspect of garage sales with women.

[23] According to Gregson, Metcalf and Crewe (2007), consumption includes ridding as referenced on page 9 of this thesis. I separate the two terms in order to be able to more easily discuss ridding as a different phase of consumption.

Keeping in mind that sorting things from our pasts in the present is necessary for future consumption and ridding, several participants in my study provided examples of the link between consumption and ridding on their narrative surveys. They wrote about ridding from their homes to make space in order to consume more stuff to incorporate into their homes, which certainly requires a collision of the present with an imagined future. A yard-sale holder from Baton Rouge wrote that "getting rid of stuff" was her main motivation for holding garage sales, as doing so would allow her to continue "accumulating more stuff" (138.12). An 18-year-old participant from Kentucky at the WLYS wrote that she holds yard sales to "make room for other items" (74.14), which highlights the act of ridding as predicated on past and future acts of consumption. Another participant revealed on the narrative survey a similar motivation for holding yard sales: "getting rid of too much overload in house" (119.12). This quotation deals with the issue of space in the participant's present—there isn't currently enough space in the house to live comfortably, or there is an overload of existing contents—which would prevent items consumed in the future from being incorporated in the home.

2.6 Consuming and Ridding Memories, Things, and Stories

The items, even if owned by others, may also summon memories and links to other people, places and experiences through familiarity of aesthetic, smell, sound, or texture. According to anthropologist Jean-Sébastian Marcoux (2001), material culture has agency because of "the fact that sorting forces objects into consciousness" (p. 72). Similarly, Miller (2001) has suggested that "people get rid of things as if wanting to better remember … a form of refurbishment of their memory" (p. 85). This same sorting, as a component of the ridding aspect of consumption, occurs before and during garage sales, causing associated and associating memories of the spectacular and the ordinary to be dredged up. In a recorded interview, one participant revealed the following story about her sorting process as she was deciding which items would leave her home and be in her yard sale:

> Well, this is the one that I felt most conflicted about. … This bear, I was in Newark with my former student Nena. She … we went out to eat, to get some pizza for

> lunch. She's very nice but she's … like, has a lot of challenges, not only a lot of challenges with the English, but just like she's probably stayed the same the most of anyone in the class and she has made the least progress, so I always felt like sympathetic about that 'cause it … well, anyways, sometimes we would go out for pizza, like, afterwards. She liked to do that and then, um, she knew that it was my birthday and so we were going, like, walking back towards the bus and she was like. … She wanted to buy me something and I didn't want her to because, like, she doesn't have a lot of money and plus like I don't know I just … it was nice to spend time with her. She went into this. … She coaxed me into going into this store and then she was, like, Elanore, you like? And she kept holding different stuff up and I was like, "No, nope," because I felt like the only way I could, like … it was sort of a complicated thing. I mean it's not a complicated thing to say that you don't want something, but at the same time it is. So I was, like, just saying no to everything and I was like, "Nope, I don't like that, I don't like that, I don't like that," which was making it really hard for her and I was like, oh, God, this is even worse. She's just trying to find something that she wants, that I would like, but like I'm trying to say no to everything 'cause I don't want her to give me anything and so then finally I left and I, like, leave the store and I'm like, "Nena, bye! I have to catch the bus. I can't stay." I told her, don't buy me anything. So I started walking down the street and I thought she would come running after me instead of staying in there and buying something. But she didn't. She like stayed in the store and bought something for me and then came running down the street and it's like 90 degrees, it's, like, really hot, like Louisiana now, and she's just running down the street and she gives me the bear. I was like, Oh, my God." It makes it special because she bought me this bear, but *I don't want this bear. I really* don't want this bear.
>
> I feel like in my room, I want to keep it … nice. But I wanna, I would be willing to sell it at the same time. So I feel like I need to protect the condition that it's in. Like, I don't want anything to happen to it.[24]

I then asked the participant how she would feel if someone bought her bear at her yard sale and gave it to her or his dog to chew on, to which she replied, "That would make me upset." The participant admitted that she allowed it to take up sentimental space in her mind, but not space in her house, and was therefore willing to part with it at her yard sale. She became visibly and audibly upset when she imagined other ways the bear might be used by a potential customer. According to geographers Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith (2005) "clearly, our emotions *matter*" (p. 1). In this case, they matter in the sense that the sorting process of ridding (necessary for holding a yard sale) can create new emotions through imagining future use(s) of items. Memories of emotions

[24] An excerpt from an interview on March 29, 2010, with Elanore.

associated with the item also matter because they can call forth previously experienced emotions from the past into the present.

The importance of objects for people, much like the home, is always changing according to various factors. In regard to how things become valuable, Marcoux (2001) notes that:

> Things take on their value from their association to events that are constitutive of the person or of the family's history. They take on their value from their association to important persons as well. Things become all the more important when they constitute the sole link with a person, for instance a deceased person: an ancestor, kin, a close friend. (p. 72)

Not only are stories about objects told at yard sales revealing, so are the stories told about yard sales. In a recorded interview a participant revealed the following story about how consumption/ridding at a yard sale from the past became relevant in her present and her friend's future:

> My friend Ally's mom died of breast cancer when she was a freshman in college and her father [has] been since then very, um, sort of not forthcoming with her mom's things, even though each of the kids, and there are five kids, each one of them has something that their mom, like, made for them specifically and left for them specifically, like scrapbooks and stuff, but the everyday things, like her clothes and you know her shoes and you know just blankets or whatever you have around the house, trinkets. … He locked all of those up and doesn't want them to, like, touch her stuff. And so my mom, because we lived in the same neighborhood and we would all have neighborhood garage sales and stuff. … My mom was really good friends with Ally's mom, um, remembers that she bought two dresses and a pair of shoes at a garage sale a long time ago from Marta, Ally's mom. So she e-mailed me today and asked me if Ally would want those things. And it made me really happy that she remembered where she got them and from who and thought to think of Ally, that she might want them, especially since her father won't really let her touch those things or have those things.[25]

The two dresses and pair of shoes that were purchased at a yard sale years earlier now have a different significance and represent a link to a deceased family member. Ally will have the opportunity to feel, handle, and possess something that her mother used and owned in a quotidian manner, an opportunity that her father would not afford her. This particular story is significant because it links the past, present, and future through items consumed. Items that had been ridded

[25] From an interview with Lacey on March 4, 2010

from the home at a yard sale and consumed by Lacey's mother in the past became important in the present[26] and will potentially be important in the future by serving as a material link between Ally and her deceased mom.

This also provides an example of how material items aid in the fabrication of a home. Ally's father would not let his children remove or handle the material items of his deceased wife in order to maintain his imagined idea of home when she was alive. It seems an attempt to *freeze* a period of time through locking those things up. This attempt requires disregarding the understanding that when his wife was living in the house and using her things, nothing was static, but always changing. It also requires denial of the fact that, even though he and his children are not handling the items, they are still in flux and undergoing processes of decay. Marta's things continue to play a role in the creation of home and would do so regardless of their presence, alteration, or absence. The absence of Ally's mother, Marta, makes the presence of her mom's things all the more valuable, even though her mom chose to rid these things at the yard sale in the past.

In addition to the importance of memories surfacing during the production of yard sales, memories about past yard sales matter too. Many participants had fond childhood memories of yard sales. As on participant said, "Yard-saling with my mom as a kid is a favorite memory for me" (91.17). One man wrote that his favorite memory from holding a yard sale was "getting to set there with my wife" (93.17). While those were fond memories of spending time with family, one interviewee revealed that she "hated being dragged to yard sales as a kid." She attributed her lack of participation in yard sales as an adult to her unpleasant experiences as a child. These memories matter because they influence one's present and future willingness or unwillingness to participate in yard sales.

[26] The present of the interview, what has now become a past.

A person's past landscapes of ridded things from the home and his or her stories have the potential to be integrated into the future landscape of another's home through the acts of storytelling, ridding, and consumption. Things that have been divested and their stories are very much relevant in the present in that "the past landscapes and discarded mementos of other people's kitsch are … interwoven with … present landscapes" (DeLyser, 2009, p. 2). In regard to connecting people to other people and things, both temporally and spatially, DeLyser offers:

> I think that such souvenirs can work to link people and places, to each other, and to different times. Kitsch souvenirs, to me, can work to connect traveling to dwelling, loss to remembering, object to emotion. And in so doing … kitsch objects build intimate geographies of social memory. (p. 5)

These connections are noteworthy and can be applied to kitsch, souvenirs, and other kinds of mundane items. DeLyser's realization "that the significance of the items lay not in the items themselves, but rather in what the items apparently did for their purchasers—linking them to places they'd been and the experiences they'd shared (or wanted to share), helping them build social memories" (p. 6) is applicable in the case of consumption and divestment at garage sales. The *Golden Girls* character Blanche, in the opening excerpt of this chapter, through her souvenir salt and-pepper shakers was transported to the time and place she bought them. She was also connected to the imagined community of those able to "properly" recognize and appreciate Elvis memorabilia. Likewise, the hammock I described repurchasing in Chapter 1 served as a desired link between me and my grandfather, a particular place (El Salvador) and a particular time in my past, as well as an undesired link to a person and past.

Another example of creating links to past landscapes through material objects and stories comes from a female participant from Tennessee at the WLYS. She held multiple garage sales with other family members because they had "too much stuff" because of "death in the family" (23.1). By cohosting a garage sale with family members, she also participated in collaborative storytelling and therefore the coconstruction of familial memories while pricing, cataloging, displaying, and selling

items, which linked living and deceased people to other places and times—the objects triggering memories of actual experiences or experiences that had been told and passed on.

Participants do not necessarily buy an item purely for its utilitarian purpose. These objects, in addition to aiding the memory of the sale-holder, can also transport salegoers to other places and times—when, as children, they had similar toys to one at a yard sale. These familiar things can educe memories of the things aiding in the creation of our homes of the past. These everyday objects can fulfill a utilitarian purpose as well as open a floodgate of memories. Everyday objects and things that are more or less taken for granted, as Marcoux (2001) puts it, "are also, if not mostly, mnemonic objects" (p. 72). Memory and sentimentality are linked through consumption and expressed through stories and emotion.

Storytelling associated with the acts of ridding and consumption can serve several purposes. One 38-year-old yard-sale holder stated that she "usually can make up a story of where stuff comes from" (62.5). It is important to note that people buy, consume, and rid more than the material item; they are buying, consuming, or ridding a connection to a real or imagined past in order to have space for an imagined future.

A 53-year-old yard-sale holder reflected on her divestment practices and admitted that she liked to discuss the history of items she is selling because "it adds value to the items for the consumer," but also because it "helps [her] let it go" (144.4). This participant used storytelling as a way to add value, but also as a cathartic release of the intangible attachment to items that once contributed to the creation of her home.

In an informal interview during the WLYS, one participant recounted a story about attending a yard sale years earlier. She described buying some baby furniture at unbelievable prices for her pregnant daughter. The participant was concerned about the low prices and asked the sale-holder why the furniture was so cheap. The participant reported that the sale-holder confided in her,

by whispering in her ear, that she had to flee her home the next day to go into the witness protection program. This provides an example of storytelling to rid more quickly as opposed to trying to get top dollar. This story also provides an example of an opportunity for the sale-holder to literally and figuratively shed her identity before entering a program that would require her to do so.

While attending a garage sale in Baton Rouge, I made note of a woman telling her story to a customer as she was checking out. The sale-holder explained that she was selling her furniture in order to make money to pay her mortgage. I do not know if this was her real situation or a story created to play on the emotions of the customer.

Another example of appealing to the emotions of customers in order to fetch a higher price, or possibly to avoid selling something, is evident in the following excerpt from the focus group:[27]

> **AD**: It made me feel guilty because I asked her to [lower the price] on the dress that she wore to her wedding rehearsal dinner. She was like, "I wore that to my wedding rehearsal dinner." But then why are you getting rid of it?
> **KP**: Yeah, that's not your problem.

The focus-group participants continued to describe the interaction. They described the woman selling her dress as pouty and disappointed that someone did not value her material items that linked her to a personally momentous past event as much as she did.

The above example shows how the ideas of *new* and *used* play an important role in how we tell talk about our things at yard sales. In this case, the sale-holder admits she used the dress, but because she used it for a momentous occasion (for her), she perceives this use to add to, not detract from, the value of the dress. Typically the items at yard sales are used. However, there are exceptions to this; for example, the unused gift.[28]

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[27] The focus-group participants chose to use initials instead of pseudonyms.
[28] I want to note that it is difficult to determine what it even means for an item to bear the terms "used," "new," or "old." At what point in a yard sale item's cycle is it no longer new? New to whom? New to you? When does it cross a threshold or boundary? Does still having its "tags" on it make it new?

Through participant observation, I experienced yard-sale holders who would use seemingly contradictory terms, *new* and *old*, to achieve the same end—a higher price. It's "still in the package," "never been worn," or "brand new" were replies tossed back at customers by sale-holders when they were asked for a lower price. Yard-sale holders also described things as "old," "antique," or "well-loved," or described the important people who used the item during an important event to fetch higher prices.

Not only does the authenticity of stories told by sellers come into question, but also stories told by buyers to tap into the emotions of the sellers. Some focus-group participants discussed a story told by a buyer at a garage sale held by two of the participants:

> **KP**: I found a wedding band at work, and I don't know how anyone loses their wedding band … and I don't know if it was a wedding band, but it was old and it had, like, filigree on the side of it and diamonds. I mean it wasn't anything like … it probably would've appraised for $200 and it wasn't anything fine. … I thought it was really cool … so we had to keep it at work for six months or whatever and then I got it, and I mean no one else was going to do anything with it, and so I priced it at … the yard sale. A couple people asked about it. We had it in a box with a sign on it that said what size it was and how much. … I think, I don't remember what we started it out as, but I had taken it to a jeweler just to make sure that everything was legit because you could tell it was old and, um, maybe $200 or something. … This lady came at the end of the day and had lost her wedding band and had been married for 40 years or something and it fit. She was like, "Oh, I only have $30, will you take 30 for it?" or whatever. I was just like, "OK," and so we did. It was like Cinderella and she had this big story of how she lost her band or whatever, but that was cool.
> **CK**: Did you believe her?
> **KP**: Yeah. I mean she … yeah … I did.
> **KP** [*to CP, in a shocked voice*]: You didn't believe her?
> **CP**: [*hesitates and mumbles*] … I did.
> **CK**: I'm just saying, somebody could, you know, actually do that and not …
> **KP**: I mean, what was I going to do with it, you know?
> **CK**: Yeah … right, right, right. … Do you think there are people who, like, have, like, shticks like that?

Through my participant observation, I have been privy to many stories, which are usually told by the seller(s) of the item(s). In this case, the customer related the story to the sellers. It is interesting that the customer did not question the authenticity of the ring, but another focus group participant called into question the authenticity of the customer's story. As DeLyser's (1999) work suggests, the

importance lies not in whether someone's story is true, but what the emotional and material consequences of engagements with authenticity are.

A yard-sale participant from Russell Springs, KY, wrote, "I usually give a detailed description with as much color and graphics as I can" (70.5) when holding a yard sale. A-yard sale attendee from Addison, MI, likes discussing the history and sentimentality of the items that others are ridding, writing that "the story helps make the item" (71.5). This notion, that the story is seen as an integral part of an item, helps make the case that people are buying and selling a sort of hybrid commodity—a material object, its (hi)story, and an imagined future. As far as stories are concerned, neither buyers nor sellers really have much to lose by including a story with their sale or purchase. Stories can help lubricate a sale or a purchase by appealing to the emotions of potential future owners.

The act of consuming goods ridded by others from their homes also creates new memories. After a day of attending yard sales in Baton Rouge, one participant said unloading her purchases from her is like "discovering the stuff I bought all over again." Because she used the word *discovering*, she was not only remembering the purchased items themselves, but was recounting the acts, places, and processes of consumption.

2.7 Getting away from Home and (Re)Making Home

The topic of home emerged in various ways. It is evident that yard sales provide a way to make space in the home and create a sense of home through consuming and ridding at yard sales. The experience of attending yard sales can provide a voyeuristic experience for those trying to escape their own homes by looking at or in what makes up others' homes.

The narrative surveys contained mentions of houses and homes in various ways. One participant in Kentucky wrote on her narrative survey that one of her motivations for going to yard sales was "to get away from home" (47.14). Of course she meant to attain respite from her own home, because attending garage sales usually means going to other people's homes, therefore making

it difficult to get away from the idea of home in general. American garage sales provide this participant with the opportunity to escape her own domestic realm and experience domestic realms of *others*.

Home as a physical place, with a particular spatial layout, was mentioned in several narrative surveys as a way of arranging items for a garage sale "by rooms in the house" (105.9). The practice of arranging things ridded from the house according to which room the items came from, in a sense, reproduces a spatial aspect of the fabrication of one's home for a public audience, which may or may not be obvious to those attending the yard sale. This recognition largely depends on whether the attendees, too, in the fabrication of their own homes, place the same types of items in the same types of rooms. Through my participant observation, without entering the structure of houses, I could make assumptions about the houses. For example, there was a yard sale in Baton Rouge arranged by rooms of the house. The spatially separate grouping and display of an ironing board, iron, and a drying rack for clothing would indicate that this house contained a laundry room, whereas if it hadn't, perhaps these items would have been stored in a bedroom or closet and put on the lawn with seemingly unrelated items. They would have only been related based on the space they shared in the home with other items.

One yard-sale shopper explained on her survey that she "typically only yard sale[s] when [she's] moved into a new apartment" (115.2). Another participant wrote on her survey, "I'm a newlywed, and we are always looking for furniture" (128.2). These two quotes reveal the creation of homes through the consumption of material items from others' homes.

This chapter addressed the *where, what,* and *how* of yard sales—our homes and domestic spaces; stories, memories, and things—through the embedded processes and acts of consumption and ridding. It speaks to the complex associations we have to our things in the past, present, and future as well as how mundane practices play a role in our spatial, emotional, and social lives. The

next chapter will focus on how the spaces of garage sales are liminal spaces (in addition to private and public space) and how this liminality allows for multiple performances of the self and encountering difference.

3. LIMINAL ENCOUNTERS

American garage sales are, according to anthropologist Gretchen Herrmann (1996), "complex, multilevel event[s], [with] the social relations of exchange vary[ing] with each transaction" (p. 704). In this chapter, I add to Herrmann's understanding that they take place in complex, multilevel spaces, which are liminal. Cultural geographies of these complex events (yard sales) and their complex spaces are revealed through discourse and observation.[29] The discourse may take place in the liminal spaces of the sales, in imaginative spaces, or symbolic spaces. My empirical data come from the physical spaces of yard sales, as well as data collected *away* from yard sales[30]. Such qualifications raise a series of provocative questions: What do the liminal spaces of American garage sales of our pasts, presents, and imagined futures reveal? How do the roles of these spaces divulge personal systems of value determination, identity performance, socialness, and social (re)production?

Spaces of garage sales are liminal in several ways. In the preceding chapter I discussed yard sales as being on the threshold of private and public. In this chapter I argue that yard sales are economically liminal, between first-cycle retail values and personal value-determination systems. I argue that yard sales are liminal in the sense that they challenge social and shopping conventions. The things at yard sales, further, are liminal because they are on the threshold of retention and the garbage dump. Also, the paradoxical attributes (see Rose, 1993) of these spaces are created by and create opportunities for various expressions of self.

The liminal properties of yard-sale spaces play a role in the ways in which we imagine ourselves and our corporeal abilities. Encounters with others provide a reflective experience, in that we are always defining ourselves in relation to others. In addition to reflexive processes, because we are (re)producing socially constructed roles and power dynamics, refractive processes are at work in part because of the spaces' liminal private and public qualities. To note the importance of

[29] This refers to written and/or spoken discourse.
[30] The focus groups were not held at yard sales, but away from them.

understanding American garage sales as liminal, I look to work about car-boot sales (British garage sales) from geographers Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe (1997):

> The space of the car-boot sale is argued to be one where people come to play, where the conventions of retailing are suspended, and where participants come to engage in and produce theatre, performance, spectacle, and laughter. We go on to…argu[e] that the car-boot sale needs to be read in multifarious ways: as a liminal space which encapsulates the carnivalesque, the festive, and the popular, which subverts convention and yet which, through its celebration of the free market and the unshackled individual, embraces facets of the dominant order. (p. 87)

Drawing on Gregson and Crewe's argument for multilayered analyses of car-boot sales, I argue the same for American garage sales because they also include liminality in relation to identity performance, economies, and (re)productions of social constructs. Performances and narratives at American yard sales, like car-boot sales, are liminal in the sense that they are associated with transitions—transitions of shedding or consuming identities, transitions of remembering and forgetting, transitions of emotion, and performative transitions of actual bodies and perceptions of bodies.

Liminality, in the context of this chapter, provides opportunities for chance, escape and encountering *others* in unconventional ways in unconventional spaces, because, as Quentin Stevens (2004) suggests, "the coupling of anonymity and visibility in public can frame opportunities to escape from conventional social roles and perform new understandings of self" (p. 153). In regard to understanding the self, links between identity and consumption (see Gregson, 2007) highlight tensions between personal value determination and predetermined prices of first-cycle retail consumption. One's personal systems of determining values can transcend social and economic conventions as well as (re)produce them with(in) spaces of American yard sales.

3.1 Perceptions, Difference, Social Opportunities

The liminality of the public and private space of garage sales that I discussed in Chapter 2 allows for the element of chance. I apply Stevens' (2004) notion of chance in public space as "an

escape into the unpredictable, relatively unrestricted social involvement [that] is part of the thrill" (p. 148) to American garage sales. Chance encompasses that which we expect to find at any given garage sale, as well as the potential for the unique and unexpected. The action at yard sales, like in public spaces in urban landscapes, "evolves on the spot, [and is] shaped by the contingencies of people brought together in time and place" (p. 149). Stevens' point about urban space is particularly relevant when applied to the liminal spaces of yard sales: "What makes chance so captivating is the tension brought on by the risk of the unknown" (Stevens, 2004, p. 148). This tension is conveyed through what one yard-sale participant wrote: "I fought a man once for a blender" (18.17). What makes this fight worth reflecting on are the possibilities of what is expected and what is unexpected. Perhaps the man expected to buy a blender, but not fight. Perhaps he expected to fight, but not over a blender. The opportunity to act in a deviant way is not uncommon in liminal space (Stevens, 2004) and illustrates the effect that chance and tension have on participants.

While financial motivations are plentiful, I examine perceptions, difference and social opportunities as they relate to diversity, motivation, chance, escape, and identity. What do yard salers feel non-yard salers think about the former's identity as participants in yard sales? Having a yard sale and shopping at yard sales provides an opportunity to encounter people, whether they are family, friends, or strangers. For some a major motivation for yard sales includes social elements. Participating in yard sales is linked to a sense of escape, chance, and potential encounters (with the self and others) on multiple scales.

In addition to the opportunity for the unknown, people are motivated to attend and hold yard sales for a variety of reasons. What do people's motivations for holding and attending garage sales reveal about their identities, perceptions of others, circumstances, or values? What roles do escape and chance play in these complex events?

Motivations for holding and attending yard sales run the gamut. One of the main motivations for holding garage sales for a Baton Rouge participant is to "recycle used goods" (150.12). The following quotes from the narrative surveys provide current examples of Herrmann's (1984) suggestion that yard-sale shoppers could be consuming in secondhand spaces as a reaction to a tumultuous economy. One participant said "value in a rotten economy" (27.14) was his motivation for going to yard sales. Other participants stated "cheaper prices than retailers" (64.14), "cheaper than store" (42.14), and "good stuff at a cheap price" (109.12) as impetuses for participation. Evident in some of the responses are motivations for shopping at garage sales instead of shopping at firsthand retail stores (at least on yard-sale days).

Many participants expressed the desire for social interaction as motivation for holding or attending yard sales. A Baton Rouge yard-sale holder said she has yard sales "for the camaraderie" and acknowledged that she "could get more for a write off on taxes through the Salvation Army" (144.12). Another yard-sale holder admits that yard sales are "lots of work," but thinks it pays off because "they are fun" and "people come together" (148.13) for the event. One participant likes to hold and attend yard sales in his city, Baton Rouge, so he can "make lady friends" and "pick up on ladies" (120.13). Another Baton Rouge participant looks forward to yard sales because it is "a weekly event with friends" (104.12). Some participants expressed the desire to be social with people already familiar to them, while others wished to engage people from other places or backgrounds.

For those that wish to engage people from other places or backgrounds, the liminal space fosters the element of chance in regard to diversity. Responses from yard salers on the narrative surveys indicate their perceptions regarding the populations with which they interact and of which they are a part while yard saling. One participant noted there was a "fairly diverse mix of White, Hispanic, & African-American" people (101.10). Another said there was "lots of diversity! In race, class, gender" (103.10). Focusing on class, one participant wrote, "I mostly noticed class diversity—

from poor to upper class" (115.10). Still others reported seeing "anybody and everybody" (120.10); "very diverse group—all races, religions, very interesting the people you meet" (144.10); "thought it would be lower SES [socioeconomic status] but is more diverse—crosses age, gender and seemingly economic status" (180.10); "rift raff [*sic*]" (152.10) and "hookers" (37.6); " multiple ages/races attend" (153.10); and for some the social diversity reflected "the mix of the neighborhood and surrounding areas" (164.10). A white, 42-year-old shopper shared that one of her favorite things about going to garage sales is "talking to people from different places, states" (58.17).

When participants wrote about their perceptions of what others thought about their involvement in yard sales, many inscriptions of identity markers surfaced. One yard-sale participant wrote that some of his friends or family members believed that "only those who can't afford anything else" (81.6) shop at yard sales. Yard-sale shopping is "somewhat looked down on by some," wrote one participant, who also revealed that she has endured "lots of joking from some friends" (43.6) because of how they perceive her involvement. A participant wrote that "my sister won't shop at garage sales—her reason is it's other people's junk" (6.6). One man felt that "some associate yard sales with rednecks" (68.6). Another yard sale participant wrote, "people think you are poor instead of frugal" (150.5), or just that "you're poor" (113.5). One participant replied that some people think "they're all hoarders" (104.5). While "some people may see it as a thing lower-class people do," a participant from Louisiana thinks "it is a common ritual in more diverse classes, all types of people hold and go!" (103.5). The dominant social construct is classed, as seen in the beliefs expressed about poor people shopping at yard sales; participant observation and the narrative surveys, however, showed the desire for a sense of social or communal engagement. Herrmann (see Herrmann 1996, 1997, and 2006) writes about gift-giving at garage sales to create community, a sense of place, belonging—home. Herrmann and Soiffer (1984) discuss the idea of fun in relation to garage-sale events.

As mentioned by participants, the diversity of participants ranges. Herrmann (1996) argues that "social distinctions—such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation—can clearly affect the garage sale transactions; larger social tensions can be played out and hierarchies reproduced on a small scale in the garage sale setting" (p. 709). She also acknowledges, however, that "given its intimacy, egalitarian ethos and the fact that participants may come into contact with many more types of people than they otherwise might, it also can break down social barriers" (p.709). In a similar vein, according to Stevens (2004), "public spaces do not force order upon social life" (p. 149) because "intentions, functions and rules overlap and contradict one another within public spaces; they are not subordinated to any overall rationality" (p. 149). The event of the yard sale (including ones in the past, present, and future) provides opportunities for encounters, and "the negotiation of these encounters makes demands upon the … intellectual resources and social skills, stimulating new performances of self which engender … development as a social being" (Stevens, 2004, p. 148) for both sellers and shoppers.

Insofar that garage sales provide opportunities for engagement, they can also provide multiple opportunities for escape. A large-scale annual garage sale like the World's Longest Yard Sale (WLYS) draws people who travel various distances and treat the event as a journey and/or destination. Or, on a different scale, the desire to escape one's own everyday conventions on a conscious or subconscious level provides just enough escape. A 20-year-old participant from Highland Heights, KY, described the WLYS as a "four-day vacation filled with garage sales on [Highway] 127, and spending the nights with friends on a farm" (64.17). She did not mention shopping at all, but focused on the WLYS as an opportunity to spend time with friends and escape her normal routine. She treated it as a vacation, not only a respite from her everyday life, but also an opportunity to encounter others. A white, female 60-year-old from Crab Orchard, KY, fondly remembers "spending 19 days going up the coast to Maine buying at yard sales" (99.17). One

WLYS participant does not hold yard sales, but will "only go to the [WLYS on Highway] 127" and will not "ever go to any others" because it "is just fun to travel" (54.18); likewise, a shopper on the WLYS described it as a "fun trip" and said he also will "only go to the long yard sales" (14.14).

The idea of escape includes the concept of *going away* and also includes a *going to*. Some participants expressed the desire go away in order to seek out things they considered to be old, unique, or a treasure. Escaping the familiar conventions of everyday life means that there is the chance to encounter "cool stuff" (9.14), "odd things" (25.14), or "unique items" (46.14). Such words as *curiosity* and *treasure* were popular when people wrote about their motivation for attending yard sales. One yard-sale shopper was "looking for old things" (48.14), while another was just "curious to see what people are selling" (41.14). One participant enjoyed "going and searching for treasures" (25.1). Because yard sales are on the threshold of first-cycle shopping and dumpster-diving, they provide the potential of chance encounters with both diverse people and diverse things in a variety of conditions.

Within these diverse spaces the roles of that different people play in putting together a yard also sale vary widely. Herrmann (1997) described the role men play in holding a garage sale as physical, in that they help set up the infrastructure, put up signs, carry and move heavy objects, and break down the sale when it is finished—this was also often the case as revealed in narrative surveys and participant observation. Display and exhibition are integral parts of the spaces and the events of yard sales. This, of course, involves bodies to physically move the items and minds to categorically arrange them.

I also noticed a trend of sharing and helping with the same tasks. Of the allotment of work, one holder described the duties as "equal" (19.8), indicating a number of people working together. In contrast, responses like "I handle everything" (2.8), "all me" (4.8), and "I do everything" (5.8), in regard to who does what when holding yard sales, reveal a trend of the go-it-alone method.

Herrmann described the role of females as an extension of household work. I also found, as Herrmann did, that women were largely responsible for deciding which household products were worth keeping and which were worth getting rid of, as well as how much these items were worth monetarily.

While I found these assessments to also be present in the data I collected, there were many women who perceived their roles to be equal to their male counterparts. Herrmann found that women were often left in charge of pricing only because of their experience with shopping; I, however, found value determination and pricing practices falling on both genders—perhaps owing to the prevalence of consulting online sources. At one sale in Tennessee, I observed a female holder directing the male participants to move tables and ladders to create their sale space, after which she proceeded to move the smaller items onto the tables. Our identities are not only influenced by our relationships to *others*, but also relationships to and understandings of our own bodies: for example, one's perceived strength or lack of strength to move tables. This observation also presents the perception that one's assumed abundance of strength should not be wasted on lightweight items.

3.2 Body Awareness

Bodies moving through these liminal spaces affect and are affected by performances of bodies, as well as perceptions of personal ability. I have observed several people, my mother included, attempt to lift or move things at a sale that they "ordinarily" would not attempt in, for example, a department store. A participant at a garage sale recounted an experience with "an early bird, who tr[ied] to lift a bicycle and ruptured a disk in [her] back. Expensive Yard Sale!" (34.17). The liminal space, in regard to yard sales on the threshold of firsthand shopping, offers a possibility. When buying new things, less physical interaction is typically required because the condition of the new item is assumed to be good, whereas used items may need closer inspection. Much like urban space, the vibrant yard-sale space is "closely linked to … diversity, intensity, and irrepressible

dynamism" (Stevens, 2004, p. 149). Perhaps the personal and familiar circumstances of being in a domestic realm add to people's tendency to forget their bodily limitations, or at least to reimagine them for a short time.

How we perceive our bodies, as well as how we perceive others' bodies and their abilities, is interesting because we define ourselves through difference. One focus-group participant[31] who had moved from Alabama to Baton Rouge recounted a sale that she and her husband held before the relocation:

> **KP**: I think the real phenomenon is T-shirt sales. People buy T-shirts. I don't care what they are or what size they are … sell them for a nickel or a quarter. And anything I would have that … were my clothes … not like I'm the world's smallest person, but this woman was like, "Are these children's clothes?" I was like, "No, you know they're mine." "I can't fit into that."[32]

Both the yard-sale holder and yard saler became aware of the sizes of their bodies in that interaction, and hence became aware of difference. The liminal spaces allow for various expressions of difference and overlap in regard to gender, class, "culture," religious affiliation, political association, age, ability, personal taste, value systems, size, knowledge, socioeconomic status, etc.

Identity in relation to difference also appeared in regard to ideas pertaining to how we perceive cleanliness. Encounters in yard-sale spaces, like public spaces, "occur contrary to people's general intentions to keep a civil distance from strangers. This kind of proximity leads to intense visual, auditory, olfactory and even kinesthetic encounters, which transgress boundaries of public decorum" (Stevens, 2004, p. 148). Proximity in liminal spaces of yard sales becomes interesting when we question to whom or what are we willing to be close, and what it says about us. The social reproduction of beliefs in regard to contagions (see Herrmann, 1996) are legitimized and (re)produced at yard sales. Participants expressed aspects of their identity by describing what they would not buy because of an item's smell or *unclean* appearance. Many participants, but not all,

[31] Focus-group participants chose to use initials instead of pseudonyms.
[32] Transcript from focus group on 2010, January 23.

expressed desire to avoid intimate items such as clothing and products used on or in the body. As Herrmann (1996) notes, "the felt sense of contamination deters many from shopping at garage sales and other outlets for used goods" (p. 726). Responses on the narrative surveys such as *smell*, *gross*, and *dirt* emerged as rationales for not buying certain items at garage sales. A participant from South Carolina wrote that s/he would never buy "clothes" from a yard sale because they are "dirty" (42.7). Other participants said they would never buy underwear because it is "gross!" (17.7) or "nasty" (16.7), while some won't buy shoes because of "dirty feet (sweat)" (81.7). The same goes for clothes—"Clothing, Staph infection lurking!" (27.7). For one participant, clothes present "hygiene issues" (41.7), while another participant won't buy clothes because, as she wrote, "I don't know about ... [its] history" (78.7). If outerwear isn't a hot commodity for most, neither are undergarments—"underwear, It's too personal" (71.7). The idea of contagions figures heavily into whether someone will buy something that goes on the body, such as hats—"Hats! Don't take the chance with lice" (11.7). Another yard saler would never buy "bedding, mattresses" (29.7), both items also intimately associated with the body. The opinion that "some stuff is gross" (10.6) is a personal estimation and indicated by participants in a sensory way and/or in an imagined way.

Participants may describe something as "gross" because they are able to imagine—or actually see—its former owner(s) (known or unknown) and deem them "dirty" or "gross." Others may have an imagined link to an item's former use, misuse, or disuse. A couple of participants wrote that they would never buy "porno" (97.7) or "porn material" (99.7) at a yard sale. Buyers may also avoid certain items because of allergies; as one yard-sale shopper expressed on the narrative survey, she is "sometimes scared of mold" (107.5). The idea of contagion contains corporeal concerns as well as mental and emotional factors when participating in yard sales. The relationships between consumption and identity (see Blunt, 2005, and Valentine, 1999) reflect and are reflected in the consumer's creation of self-identity through the acts of purchasing/ridding and transference of

meaning. Ultimately participants expressed that they do not perceive themselves as gross, dirty, or unclean by choosing not to buy things that they perceive as gross, dirty, or unclean, because it might mean that they were if they had.

The things that are less than desirable for many when shopping at yard sales are also very often the most common things that people sell. The same people who sell clothes, shoes, and mattresses at yard sales are sometimes those who say they won't buy them. Again, we come back to motivation. Shopping at yard sales is not always a result of desire, to find a treasure, enjoying the social aspects of secondhand, or earning the status of "bargain hunter" or "thrifty." Some holders and shoppers do so because they, for one reason or another, need "extra money" (91.1). A participant offered "being poor" (97.1) as reason for becoming involved in garage-sale shopping. Another shopper provided an economic reason for getting involved with yard sales when she wrote, "I'm Broke" (49.1), revealing her real or perceived economic status.

When deciding to hold a garage sale and deciding what to sell, people have the assumption that their stuff, while no longer desired by them, must in some way have the potential to be used or be desired by someone else. While some sellers feel that their clothes, shoes, mattresses, and other more personal items are perfectly fine to sell, when it comes to buying such goods, they steer clear for fear of contagions, be they physical, such as mold, or symbolic, such as class.

3.3 Value

The very idea of *used* allows liminal spaces of secondhand retail to not be beholden to hard-and-fast business models of established retail outlets. If they were, one would expect to barter at Walmart or haggle over the price of a sweater at Gap. In those stores, it would not matter that your favorite now-dead cousin once had a sweater just like that one, or that you just lost your job. In the liminal spaces of yard sales, in the "used world," the possibility exists for various personal value-determination systems to operate simultaneously and contrarily. Interesting observations about

bargaining and haggling (see Herrmann, 2004) can be made; however, I will focus on internal, external, and overlapping value-determination systems at work in garage sales.

In order to discuss personal value-determination systems, I draw a comparison between firsthand and secondhand retail spaces. Gregson and Crewe (2003) point out the establishment of cultural distance surrounding car-boot sales through their physical distance, and describe how these created spaces are "the product of both absolute possibilities and a symbolic imagery working within and sometimes against the possibilities constituted by the landscapes of power produced and regulated by retail capital" (p. 49). They explain the functioning of regulatory power and how it plays a role in the location of car-boot sales in the margins of conventional understandings of retail space. In the United States, like the United Kingdom, the negotiations between firsthand and secondhand retail spaces ultimately create very distinctive geographies of value. These negotiations are economic, spatial, and personal. The powers of price regulation in firsthand markets affect the price determination of items in American yard and garage sales, which, like boot sales, are located on the periphery of traditional views of retail space.

Firsthand retail shopping typically provides a somewhat predictable experience through creating uniformly built environments or presenting products in a "logical" arrangement (see Crewe, 2000, and Miller, 1995) with fixed prices. Unlike firsthand retail shopping, the spaces of secondhand retail allow for nonfixed pricing systems, which can be influenced by both external and internal factors. A broad array of value-determination processes is at work in the act of sorting and pricing for holders of American garage sales. Secondhand consumption,[33] according to Gregson and Crewe (2003), is partially based on value in the first cycle of consumption. I found that many participants used first-cycle retail as a starting point for price determination. A participant from New Orleans,

[33] I acknowledge that many of the same consumers who shop in secondhand retail spaces also shop at conventional retail sites. Additionally, I acknowledge that firsthand and secondhand retail spheres are not necessarily oppositional.

LA, for example, determined how much he would pay for an item by "compar[ing] it to prices in stores" (94.9). At a sale in Gadsden, AL, one holder priced her things after "decid[ing] how much [she] paid for it originally" (7.9), and another participant in Kentucky wrote, "I usually go by how much it cost new" (63.9), referring to how he arrives at a price for selling or buying. "Market value" (32.9) gave another holder one way of determining price. These participants provide examples of the influence of firsthand retail in value determination for secondhand markets.

While some participants relied on external sources to arrive at a value and/or price, others depended on more personal or internal factors. The price one is willing to pay for an item at a yard sale proves complex, and as Campbell (1983) suggests, "despite the presence of broad conventional exchange rates, a complex qualitative calculus exists which permits the competitive negotiation of personal estimates of value" (pp. 245-246). One participant from Kentucky decides how much to charge for an item based on its "age" and "sentimental value" (74.9). His relationship to the item and his associated memories to it are factored into the price, things that typically are not factored in at retail stores. A participant from Missouri said she determines how much she will pay for an item "according to how bad I want it and feel its [*sic*] worth" (46.9), thereby relying on a sort of intangible, emotional gauge, which is completely personal and unique. To offer another example, the hammock mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis had nostalgic value for me. I knew what I paid for it when I purchased it new, but in rebuying it I did not ask for a lower price, as I often do. The value was not economic, so I paid the price asked without question.

Since yard sales offer "a situation in which something like a price is arrived at by some negotiated process other than the impersonal forces of supply and demand" (Firth, 1983, p. 91), yard-sale holders and shoppers alike employ hybrid methods of value determination, using both internal and external factors. For example, a participant in the WLYS relied on his "experience" and a "wild guess," as well as "EBAY" and "Books" (56.9) to determine value. Another participant, who

holds and attends yard sales, is "willing to pay ½ retail or more for something [she] love[s]" but prefers "selling at retail (or less if [she doesn't] like it)" (30.9). This process takes into account one's personal taste as well as retail prices. Understandings of why certain things matter and others do not—as well as understandings of how valuation, devaluation, and revaluation relate to the acts of purchase and divestment—are influenced by retail, but also rely heavily on personal components.

These personal components can take a variety of forms, including recognition of the tension at play between needing physical space and emotional attachment, or needing money and pricing the things of a deceased acquaintance. A 53-year-old resident of Baton Rouge wrote, "Value … is best determined after you emotionally detach yourself and remember you want it out of your house" (144.9). A participant, who holds yard sales in north Louisiana, sometimes at his house and sometimes on the main highway near his home out of a U-Haul, seeks out things to sell so he can make a little money. He routinely attends storage-unit auctions and resells his purchases at yard sales. He described what it is like to buy things that once belonged to someone he knew, someone who was deceased at the time he purchased the contents of her storage locker:

> All of the sudden I saw this lady's picture that I knew. It turns out it was my daughter-in-law's next-door neighbor and her stuff was stored and then she died. Everything that was in that locker when I'm going through it, you know, I'm putting a price on Miss Anne's stuff. It's not somebody's stuff. It's Miss Anne's stuff.
>
> Because it's just, you know, what does this normally sell for, and OK, so how much can I sell it for? You know, to make a little money. But when it's … when you know the person, it's their stuff and it's … very difficult to put a price on your stuff, you know?
>
> Say Miss Anne has a bowl that I know for a fact that she really cared for, that maybe belonged to her mother, well, [the average person doesn't] care about that. … So if I put a, let's say it would normally sell for $5, I put a $10 price on it 'cause it's sentimental, you don't care about that, you want to pay five, you don't want to pay 10.[34]

[34] From interview in LA. 2010, February 27.

As this story illustrates, what constitutes junk for one person and treasure for another depends on the lived experiences of the individuals as well as the items' relation to them. Understandings can often contradict each other in realms of aesthetic, memory, utility, and value.

How we value things, whether buying or selling, is linked to our identities in that things can provide a context and story. We also provide stories and contexts for our things. How we economically or sentimentally value *stuff* becomes partly reflective of at least who we were and who we want to be. Participants often want to "make room" for things they will consume as well as "make room" for a new identity by shedding a former identity.

3.4 Conclusion

Yard sales are like cities in the sense that, as Stevens (2004) suggests, "chance is … closely linked to the city's diversity, intensity and irrepressible dynamism" (p. 149). Yard sales, too, rely on the diversity and circulation of people and things to maintain liminal and ephemeral qualities. Because these spaces are not fixed and the locations, people, and things are always changing, the element of chance plays a role. Stevens suggests that "through chance encounters with difference in public spaces, people free themselves from the security and conventionality of their everyday social experience" (p. 148). In this chapter I applied his claim to American yard sales.

I must point out and acknowledge that while encountering diversity is a major component of yard sales, where this happens is somewhat one-sided. Through participant observation, I noted that there was less diversity of race and class at yard sales that were held in less affluent neighborhoods. Overall there was a sense that encountering *others* was fine, as long as it occurred in an area that was marked as middle or upper class. If a neighborhood was perceived as lower class or dangerous, participants were typically more homogenous in regard to race and/or class. It noticed a one-way directional flow. Several participants who were my friends would either not accompany me at all or would stay in the car and wait for me while I attended garage sales in neighborhoods that were

predominantly African-American.[35] The lack of affluent people in non-affluent neighborhoods, while perhaps partially due to fear, ultimately comes back to *stuff*. There was a sense that less affluent people and affluent expected to find desirable things (even if at perceived elevated prices) being ridded in affluent neighborhoods. On the contrary, affluent people, as evidenced by a general absence, did not expect to find desirable things being ridded in less affluent neighborhoods. However, yard sales legitimized the flow of people from less affluent areas to more affluent areas and in a sense made it "ok" for them to be *there* without their presences being stereotyped as criminal or labor related.

The complex, liminal spaces and events of yard sales provide for social opportunities and "performative landscapes where everyday people call the landscape into being as they make it relevant for their own lives, strategies, and projects" (Lees, 2004, p. 89). These liminal spaces allow for the deployment of situational knowledge and personal systems of value determination. The encounter of *others*, the element of chance, and the escapism at garage-sales aid in the (re)production of social values and hierarchies of places and/or people, but can also challenge participants to resituate their understandings of themselves and others. In the next chapter, I will examine some of these hierarchies of things and spaces as they are visually represented on mental maps, as well as examine what else might be revealed about how people perceive the spaces of garage sales.

[35] For further discussion on difference see hooks, b. (1990).

4. MENTALLY MAPPING AMERICAN GARAGE SALES

In the previous chapter I discussed yard sales as liminal spaces providing opportunities for expressing the self, for example, through personal systems of value determination as well as encountering human and nonhuman others. How people understand their spatial and categorical surroundings can be expressed through narrative surveys, participant observation, and interviews; I wanted, however, to get at these understandings through visual representations as well. In order to do this, I collected more than 50 mental maps,[36] also known as cognitive maps, throughout the four-day, multistate World's Longest Yard Sale, and in Baton Rouge, LA. How do participants perceive the spaces, things, and landscapes of American yard sales in terms of the ways in which they are organized, categorized, and contextualized? How might their maps reveal cultural attitudes, stories, personal biases, and spatial hierarchies? In order to get at these questions, I focus on the attitudes, stories, perspectives, and biases divulged on the mental maps of American yard-sale spaces.

Each participant from the WLYS had approximately one quarter of the page to use for her or his map and Baton Rouge participants either used the back of their narrative surveys[37]. These were both printed on colored paper, which was done purposefully[38]; however, the complications of making these maps accessible in a non-color printing or publication of this research has made me reconsider my initial choice of using color paper. In retrospect I would have used white paper to make the maps more accessible for printing in black and white. I included a prompt on the page wherein I assured the participants that there were no right or wrong maps, since, as English

[36] In hindsight, I would have combined interviews as a follow-up to the mental-map collection in order to enhance the analysis of these maps.

[37] I asked some Baton Rouge participants in a hurry to complete only the mental map on a separate page (See Appendix B).

[38] I chose colored paper in order to not present white as a naturalized background or "blank" canvas.

professor Peter Turchi (2004) states, "our mental maps are often not terribly accurate, based as they are on our own selective experience, our knowledge and ignorance, and the information and misinformation we gain from others" (p. 28). For, as Turchi notes, although the maps in our heads have little to do with accuracy, "these are the maps we depend on every day" (p. 28). The participants committed to paper a map of a yard sale. They depended on maps in their minds to move through and interact with things-in-space at the sales and to determine categories based on their personal perceptions of categories.

For the World's Longest Yard Sale, I gave participants a narrative survey (See Appendix A) on a clipboard accompanied by a writing utensil. The survey included a request for a mental map of the yard sale where he or she was currently located. I applied Reginald G. Golledge, Roberta L. Klatzky, and Jack M. Loomis's (1996) method of mental map solicitation "by asking subjects to produce their own maps of a spatial layout" (p. 219), of the yard sale in which they were participating at that time. Admittedly I did not solicit information indicating whether the mapmaker was a sale-holder or a sale-attendee. Had I requested this information, more or different analysis would be possible. I chose to not ask the participants to indicate this status at the time because one person can be a sale-holder and an attendee simultaneously, particularly in the case of family or community garage sales.

In this chapter I will first provide a description of how other geographers and cognitive scientists have used mental maps. Next I will describe and analyze the maps I collected by suggesting potential significances or meanings. I also use elements presented on some maps to critically engage what is not presented on others. Peter Gould and Rodney White (1974) examined "the mental maps that people form of places, and … some of the things that may lie behind them" (p. 174). In this chapter I explore what lies within or behind these mental maps to come upon what they might tell us and encourage us to imagine or question. I analyze the labels on the maps to understand how

people created hierarchies of things and spaces, as well as the desires and interests of the mapmakers.

The maps analyzed for this project underscore emphasis on categorization, personal taste, and identity because, as Turchi (2004) suggests, "we believe we're mapping our knowledge, but in fact, we're mapping what we want—and what we want others—to believe" (p. 146). I analyzed the mental maps to understand how people showed or mapped hierarchies of things and spaces, as well as their desires and interests. As Turchi (2004) explains, "to chart the external world is to reveal ourselves—our priorities, our interests, our desires, our fears, our biases" (p. 146). These maps, then, reveal small stories about our identities, desires, and perceptions.

4.1 Cognitive and Mental Maps

Kevin Lynch's urban-planning research, presented in his 1960 monograph *The Image of the City*, applied cognitive mapping to explore people's perceptions of their environments and corresponding relationships to navigation. This formative work affected not only urban planning but also related fields such as geography, psychology, and cognition science.

The work done in 1960 by Lynch highlighted the importance of perception when making and reading mental maps. Lynch's work enabled geographers Roger M. Downs and David Stea (1977) to point out the subjective ways in which we perceive and represent space and place:

> Cognitive maps are not necessarily visual pictures of the world. For some people, sounds and smells play as much of a role in the image of a place as do visual inputs. For others, a picture may not be worth one word, let alone a thousand words. Representations do not have to be in the form of sensory images; word pictures can be just as effective. It is all a matter of style, of a choice of perspective on the world. There is no one universal way of looking at the world that everyone must use. (pp. 23-24)

Because we perceive things in a variety of ways beyond the visual, geographers have been innovative in their quests to represent our perceptions of the world around us. Geographers use mental maps to analyze and understand various information from corporeal and emotional cartographies (see

Nold, 2009) to way-finding, navigation, retail consumption practices (see Ellard, C., 2009), neighborhood preferences, and the like, because these perceptions are important for understanding how mental maps contribute to our "spatial choice and decision making" (Kinchen, 1994, p. 1).

Cognitive maps become particularly useful when analyzed as "a metaphorical devise; a shaper of world and local attitudes and perspectives" (Kinchen, 1994, p. 1). They also serve as a tool "for creating and coping with imaginary worlds" (p. 1) because "in some very fundamental but inexpressible way, our own self-identity is inextricably bound up with knowledge of the spatial environment" (Downs and Stea, 1977, p. 27).

According to Downs and Stea (1977), "A *cognitive* map is a *product*—a person's organized representation of some part of the spatial environment. … Most importantly, a cognitive map is a cross section between representing the world at one instant in time" (p. 6). While a cognitive map is a product, Downs and Stea (1977) point out that "*cognitive* mapping is an abstraction covering those cognitive or mental abilities that enable us to collect, organize, store, recall, and manipulate information about the spatial environment" (p. 6).

4.2 Yard Sale Mental Maps

In order to analyze the mental maps from this research, I will begin by describing the visual components. I found that there were generally three ways people created their maps—maps only containing text, maps only containing geometric shapes and lines, and maps with text and shapes and/or lines. Two of the mental maps, Figures 4.1 and 4.2, were solely textual, which made me reconsider the definition of a map. The majority of the maps included text and shapes and/or lines. Additionally some of the maps, like Figure 4.3, contain no text at all.

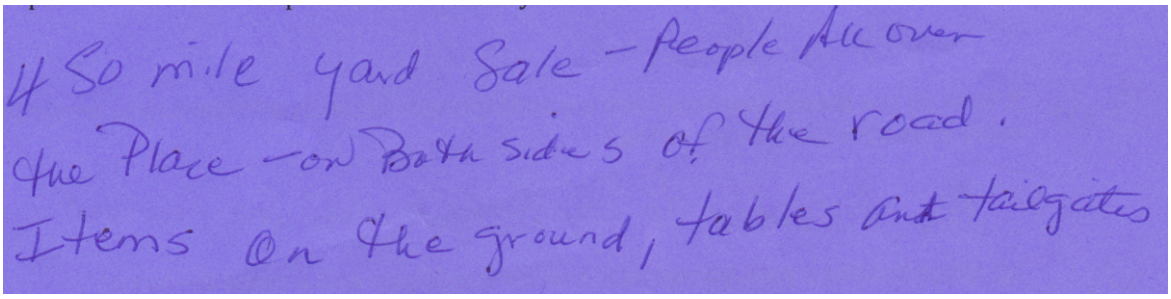

Figure 4.1. Mental map containing only text

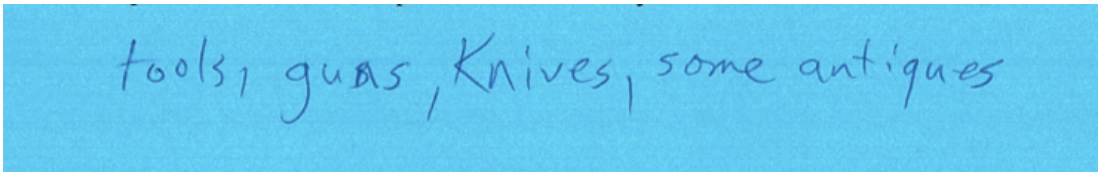

Figure 4.2. Another mental map containing only text

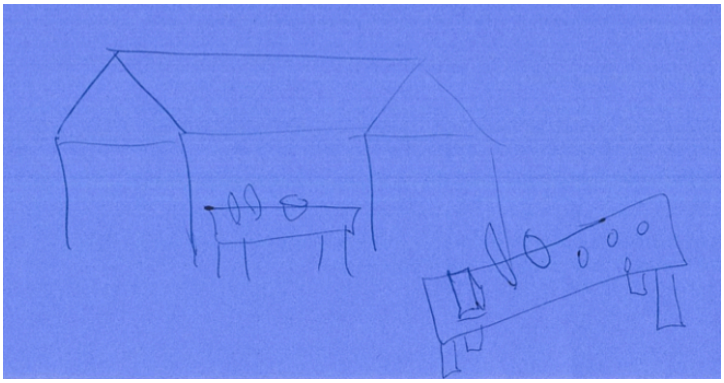
Figure 4.3. Mental map containing no text

4.3 Language and Labels

Most mapmakers for this study used written language[39] or text on or in their maps. This text appears in the form of labels in order to describe which types of items were at the sale, as well as words to communicate other information. These labels are important to show categorical understandings of the spatial layouts that the participants drew, making language important for splitting up the space and description. As Portugali (1996) suggests, "It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of language in cognition in general and in cognitive mapping in

[39] Although pictographs are a written language, I differentiate between pictures and English language text on these maps.

particular" (p. 5). Additionally, he notes, "Language is … intimately related to thinking and to the way we categorize the world around us, including the visual information we perceive and process" (p. 5). He explains that when there is a large-scale spatial component, which cannot be seen or known entirely, or the need to convey information that is not spatial, language can often supplement other elements of cognitive maps (Portugali, 1996).

Some of the participants included a lot of textual detail on the maps, while others relied more on symbols and shapes. Within the same map components in addition to text, such as spatial positioning, scale, and the presence or absence of content, created hierarchies. Figure 4.4 contains the labels "Antiques" and "less expensive antiques," which represent the mapmaker's understanding of value in a hierarchy of antiques and their corresponding prices. Figure 4.5 contains the label "Upscale linens," which communicates the mapmaker's differentiation of the classes of linens.

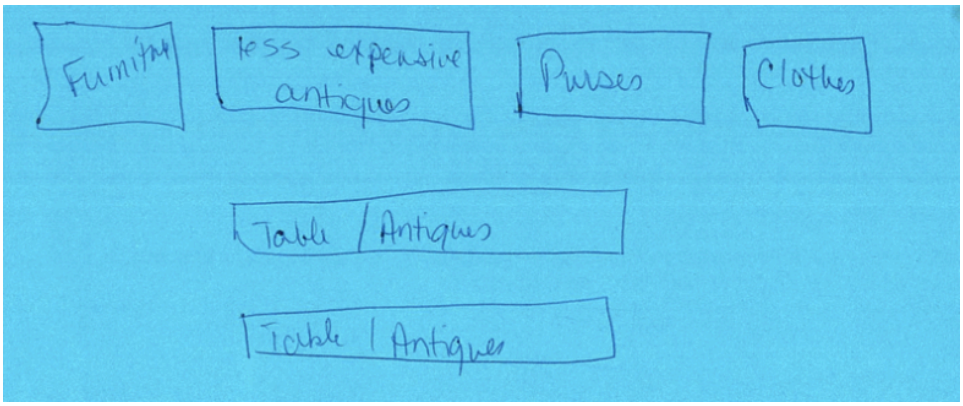

Figure 4.4. Mental map conveying hierarchy of things according to price

Figure 4.5. Mental map conveying classed inscription

Several maps—e.g., Figures 4.6 and 4.7—contain text referring to "junk." That term conjures a negative association when compared with the terms "Odds & ends" in Figure 4.8 and "what not's [*sic*]" in Figure 4.9. These labels expose biases of the mapmakers.

Figure 4.6. Mental map
with junk as category

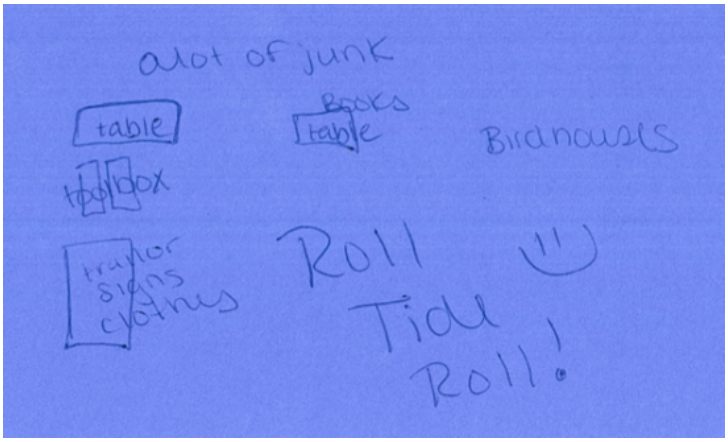

Figure 4.7. Another mental map
with junk as category

Figure 4.9. What Nots

Figure 4.10 contains a price-based hierarchy of things. It depicts two tables, one labeled "$5.00 table" and the other labeled "1.00 table." Figure 4.10 also contains categories such as linens, milk glass, and jewelry. This map also shows, within the same sale, different categorization practices at work. While some things are arranged and placed in the same space based solely on price, others are arranged according to likeness of material makeup or function, or based on a common space in which they were once used or where they will be used, such as "kitchenware." This harks back to the example in Chapter 3 of items being arranged according to the house's rooms.

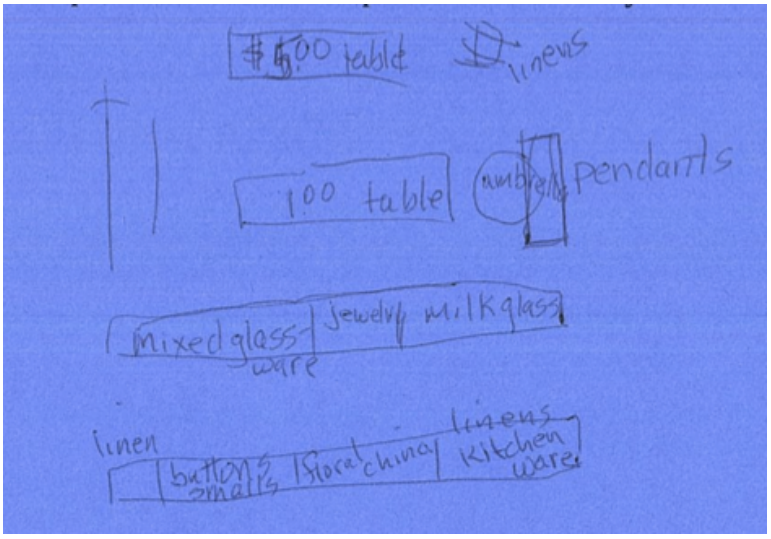

Figure 4.10. Kitchenware

The mental map in Figure 4.11 contains the following textual categories, "Vintage Clothing," "Metal Craft," "Antique Dishes," "Jewelry, Antiques," "Upscale Bedding Luxury," "Art/Pictures," "Old Volkswagen," and "Misc." The miscellaneous category might allude to disinterest in these items or perhaps to their lack of apparent theme, whereas categories with descriptors such as "vintage," "antique," "old," "luxury," and "upscale" potentially reveal the desires of the mapmaker. In Figure 4.12 the maker revealed a perception of how a space containing glassware was organized, i.e., "very neat."

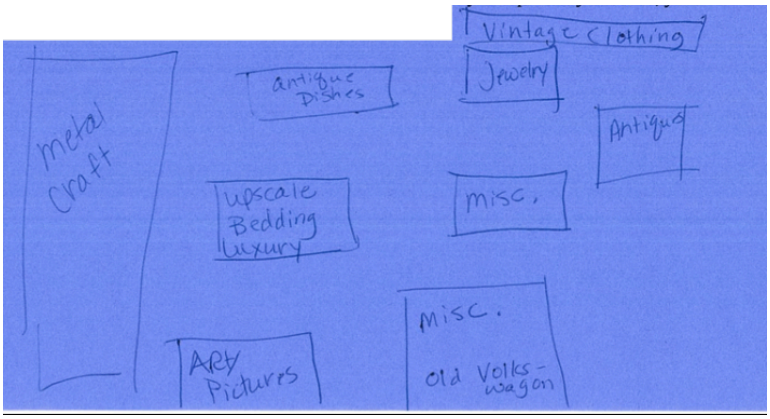

Figure 4.11. Vintage

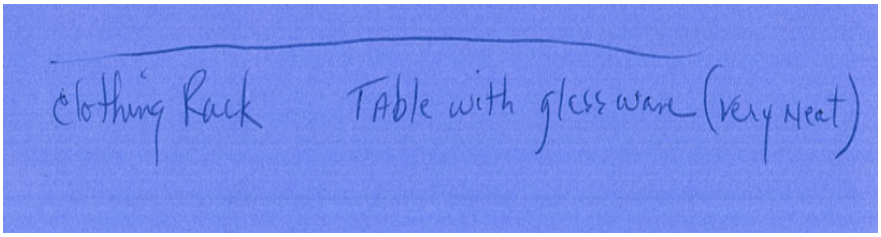

Figure 4.12. Very Neat

On the map in Figure 4.13, the text contained within the only shape reads simply "old stuff." This could express that the mapmaker either desires old stuff, or perhaps has been coerced to attend the sale and is in fact not interested in old stuff, but included it as a sort of joke in order to complete the task asked of him.

Figure 4.13. Old Stuff

One of the two labels in Figure 4.14, "Useless Stuff," definitively reveals the mapmaker's attitude about the items in that area, which was also spatially marginalized, noticeably separated from the

other items represented on the map at that sale. The "Useless Stuff" for that person in particular was apparently contained together in one area.

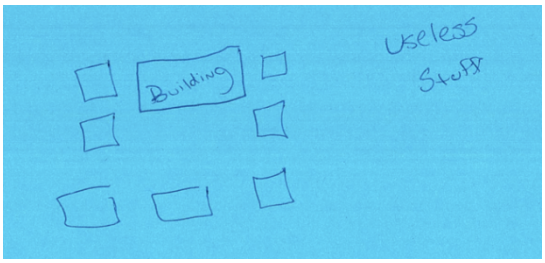

Figure 4.14. Useless Stuff

On the map in Figure 4.15, four labels appeared: "books," "glass," "stuff," and "other stuff." The category "stuff" appeared frequently, but typically with a descriptor in front, such as in Figure 4.16, which includes the labels "Office stuff" and "Baby stuff," and in Figure 4.17, which denotes "Christmas stuff" and "Fishing stuff." "Stuff" was a high-frequency category.

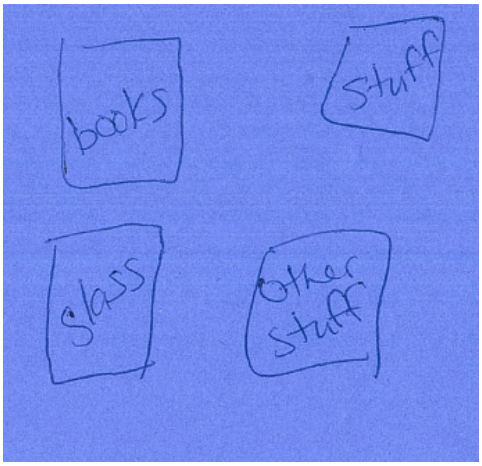

Figure 4.15. Other Stuff

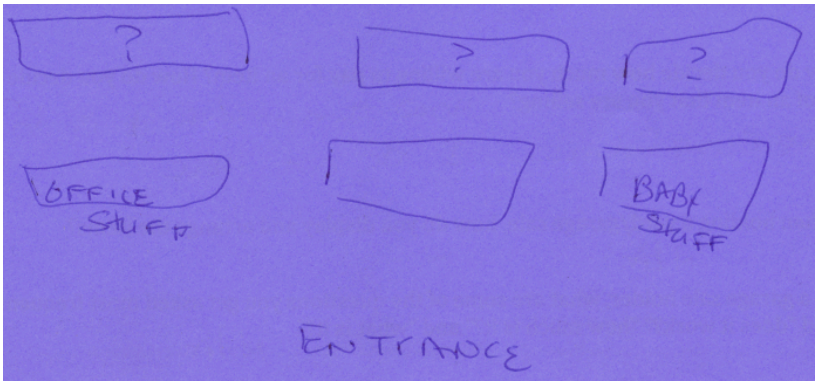

Figure 4.16. Office Stuff, Baby Stuff

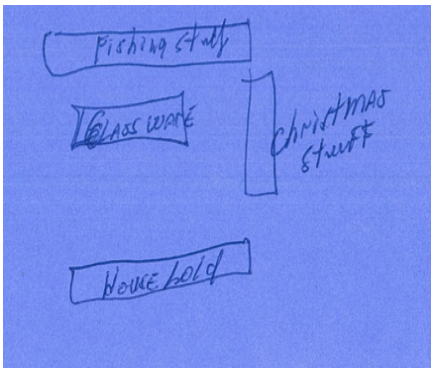

Figure 4.17. Fishing Stuff, Christmas Stuff

In Figure 4.15, the inclusion of the word "other" helps to understand how the mapmaker navigated through the space; one can surmise that the table labeled "stuff" was most likely encountered before the table labeled "other stuff." Text can act as a powerful tool for communicating spatial and nonspatial information and knowledge in and on mental maps.

4.4 Context

While language and text, as well as other components on mental maps, help contextualize yard sales, what is not on the maps can also contextualize sales. I venture to analyze what is not *there*, potentially absent or invisible, just as Gould and White (1974) "touched upon the invisible landscapes and spaces that seem to play such an important role in forming images of the world around us" (p. 10). By engaging what is *there* on some maps, I analyze what could be *absent* on others as a way to acknowledge the importance of presence and absence in these mental (re)presentations. I employ Turchi's (2004) understanding that " 'invisible' conventions are brought to mind by their absence" (p. 118). Turchi (2004) also notes that:

> The blank page, then, is only *a* beginning, as opposed to *the* beginning. Even after we mark the page, there are blanks beyond the borders of what we create, and blanks with what we create. Maps are defined by what they include but are often more revealing in what they exclude. (p. 29)

Many of the maps did not contain explicit boundaries or borders illustrating the perimeter of the yards in which the sales took place. Some did contain borders in the form of containers

themselves, such as tables and furniture—that is, the material borders of categories of items and material containers made of wood, plastic, or metal. There were also conceptual borders of categories and like items, borders of a commonality such as price, room of origin, form, or function. Some participants utilized shapes, lines, and text to represent a delineation of spaces and categories.

A few of the maps contained arrows. In Figure 4.18, the arrows and text expressed by the creator represent navigation. The text "Flow of Traffic" on this map provides an example of procedural knowledge (see Thorndyke and Hayes-Roth, 1982), which is "encoded by navigating through an environment" that is "stored as verbal information and is decoded using a procedural process" (Portugali, 1996, p. 189). Figure 4.18 also provides an example of survey knowledge (see Thorndyke and Hayes-Roth, 1982). It is distinct from procedural knowledge because it "is encoded in our memories as mental images" (Portugali, 1996, p. 189). The ideas of procedural and survey knowledge as seen in the mental map provide an understanding of how the participant perceives the space of that particular yard sale and how people move through that space in relation to the items for sale and how they are displayed. The map in Figure 4.18 was created by the person holding the yard sale, and could therefore reveal a desired path for the flow of traffic or the observed flow of traffic.

Figure 4.19 contains three arrows, which start at a central box labeled "items" and point to two tables and a blanket, perhaps to indicate that each table and the blanket held "items." These arrows do not serve to show flow of traffic, but to direct the eye from the central box to other locations on the map.

The map in Figure 4.20 contains arrows that function as connectors between the text and the symbols representing the containers of the categories labeled. This use of arrows serves directional purposes, as did the arrows in Figure 4.18 that were used to show human flows through

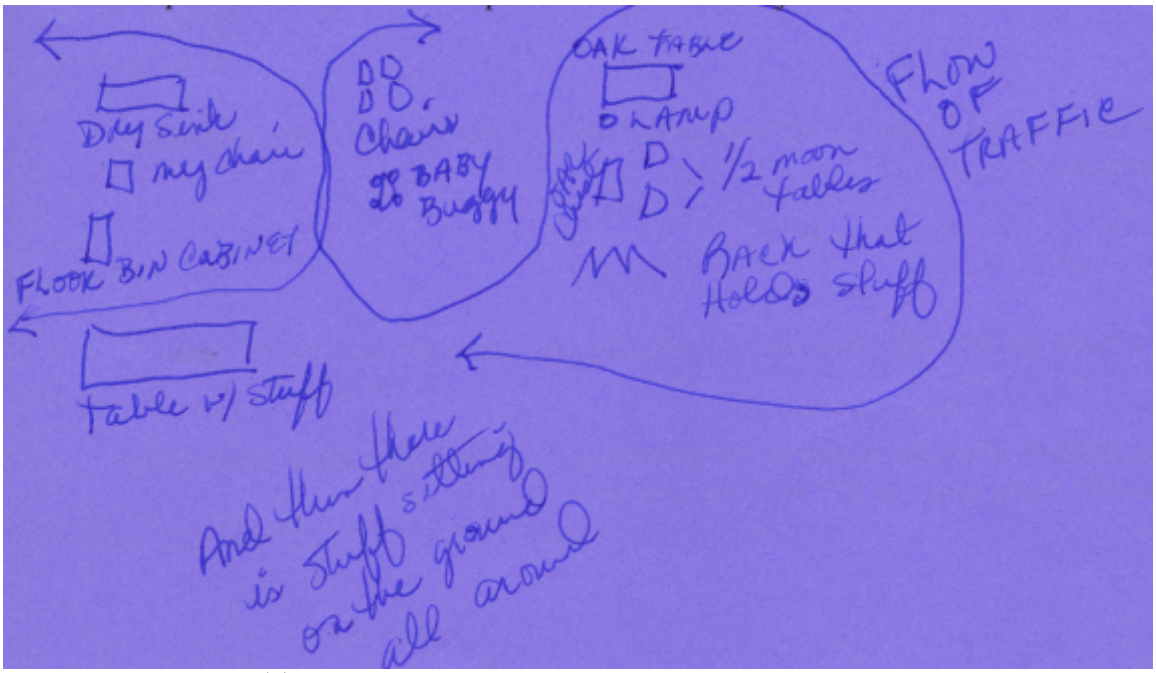

Figure 4.18. Flow of Traffic

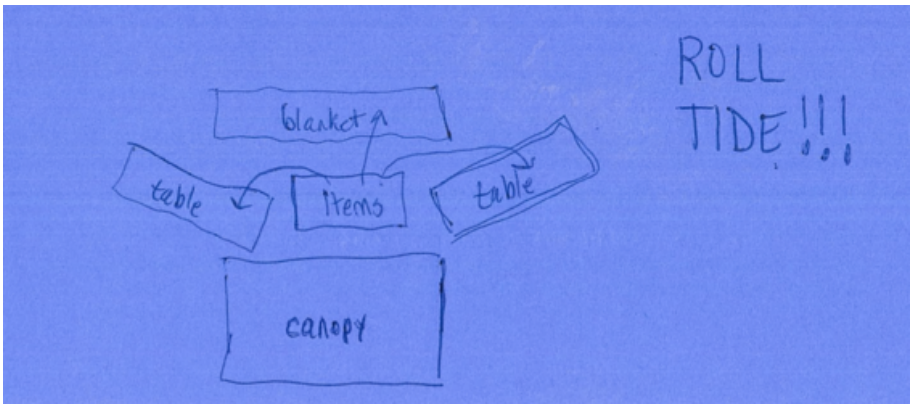

Figure 4.19. Arrow Items

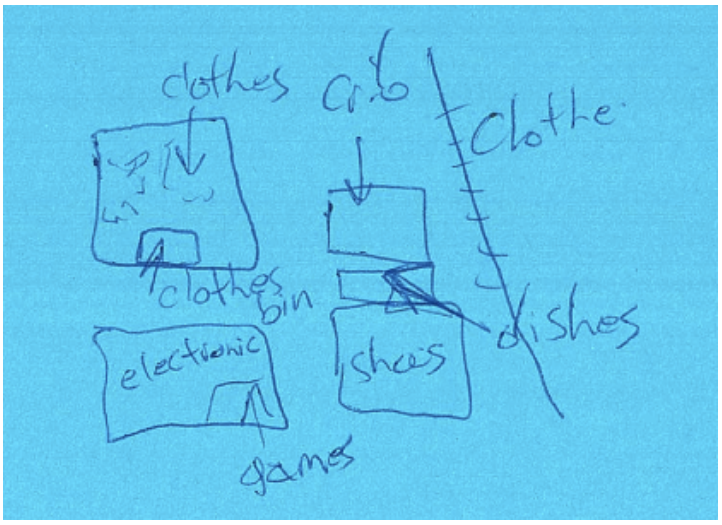

Figure 4.20. Arrow Connectors

the built environment; however, the Figure 4.18 arrows were employed as a directional cue for the human eye, an indicator to follow it to another spatial location on the page, and functioned similarly to the arrows in Figure 4.19.

These uses of arrows again underscore the importance of considering both what is present and what is or might be absent in or on these maps. Who or what is not *there*? What is *there* on some maps resulted in analyzing what wasn't *there* on other maps. Categories such as people, buildings, and nature were absent from the majority of the maps. People are, for the most part, absent from the maps. Several of the maps contained houses, buildings, or garages, but most omitted more permanent structures. Additionally, *natural* things (trees, bushes, etc.) in the environment were rarely represented.

Only three maps, including Figures 4.21 and 4.22, indicated the presence of a person through the use of the labels "man" and "Pretty Girls," respectively, and in the first two the people were presented in the context of being the sale holders. Figure 4.23 contains two people: a "watermelon guy" and a "Crazy Indian man." Additionally, Figures 4.18 and 4.24 indicate the presence of the person working or holding the sale, but only one mental map explicitly represents customers, Figure 4.1, through text that reads "people all over the place." Two of the

aforementioned maps indicate the presence of people through material culture: Figure 4.18 contains a square with the accompanying text "my chair," and Figure 4.24 left a space between two squares with borders to the left and right (but not above and below) with the text "Seating for seller."

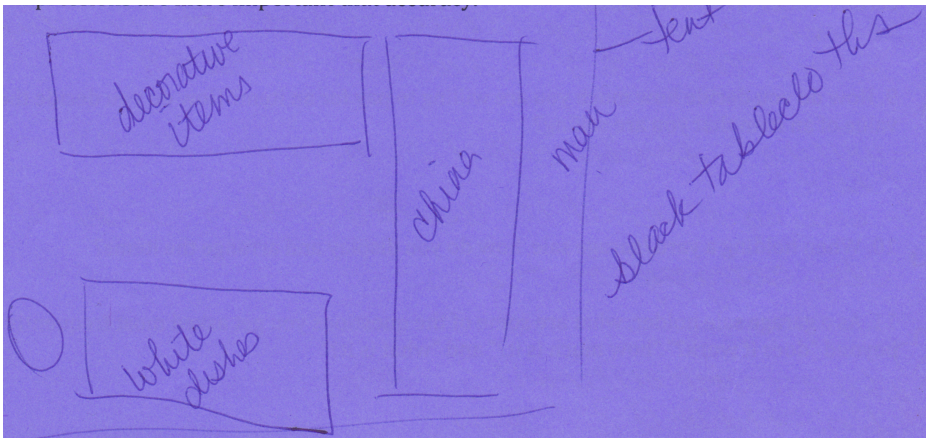

Figure 4.21. Man

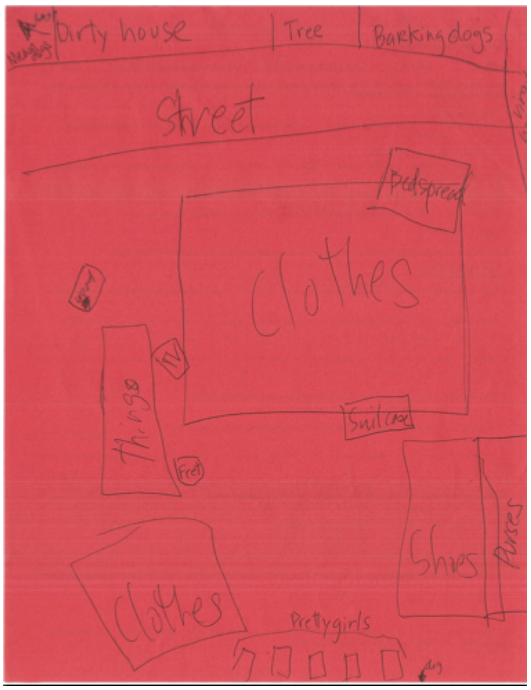

Figure 4.22. Pretty Girls

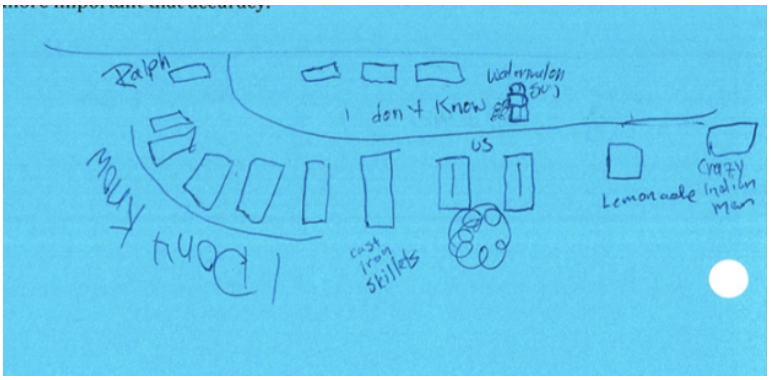

Figure 4.23. Guys

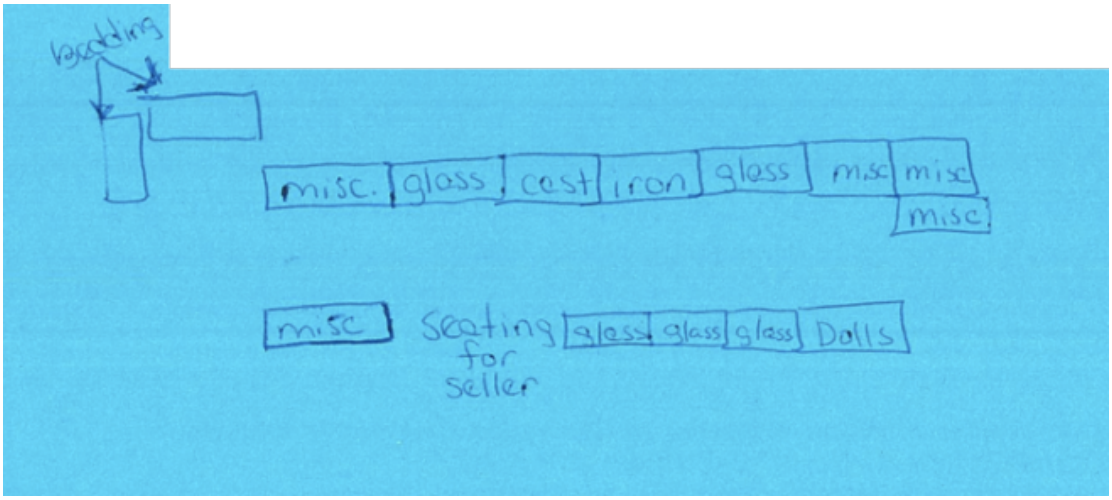

Figure 4.24. Seating for Seller

One potential explanation for the maps' absence of people is that they are moving in and through the landscapes and are thus ephemeral themselves,[40] whereas the sale-holder is a less transient part of the temporary yard sale.

Dwellings and other structures in the more permanently built environment did not appear on the majority of maps, whereas many contained more ephemeral components (items for sale), representing the intrinsic ephemerality of the space of the garage sale. People did not typically include the infrastructure of the sales, which were more permanent in comparison to the people and things in constant motion.

[40] I acknowledge that there are ephemeral components to almost everything; however, I am using *ephemeral* here comparatively. The customers' presence is likely to be more fleeting than that of the person(s) running the sale.

Tents and canopies, used to provide shade or create boundaries delineating one sale from another, such as in Figure 4.19 (symbol and text represent the canopy), were more frequent. The text in Figure 4.25 states "all under a 40´ x 60´ tent"; the tent, however, is only depicted textually on the map, whereas Figure 4.27 contains a tent depicted by a shape labeled "cover." The maps in Figures 4.22, 4.26, and 4.28 contain representations of streets, whereas most other maps do not indicate any.

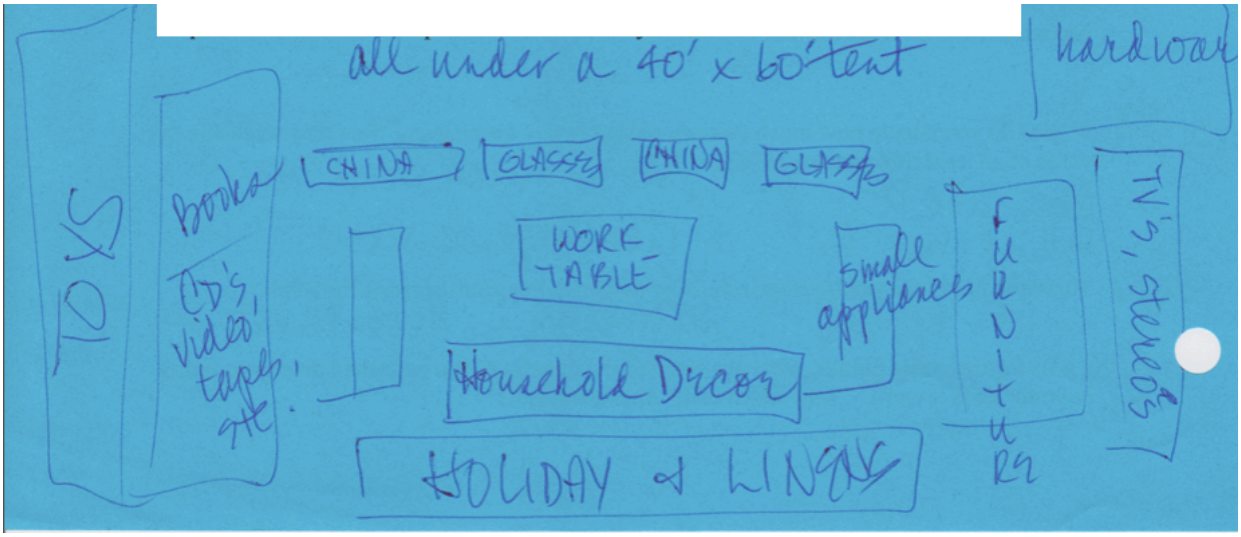

Figure 4.25. All under a 40' x 60' tent

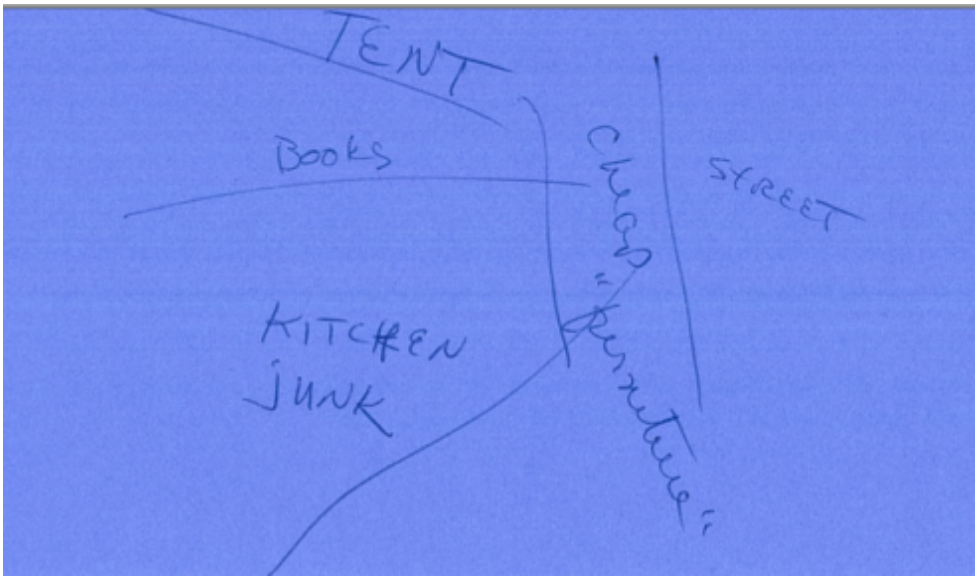

Figure 4.26. Street

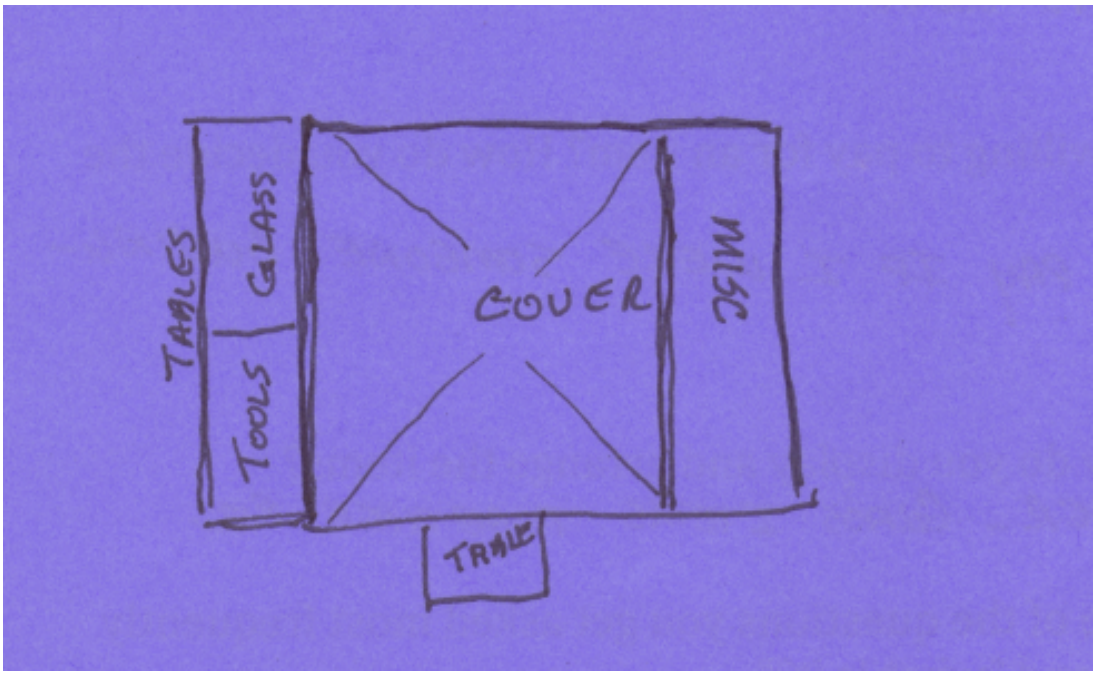

Figure 4.27. Cover

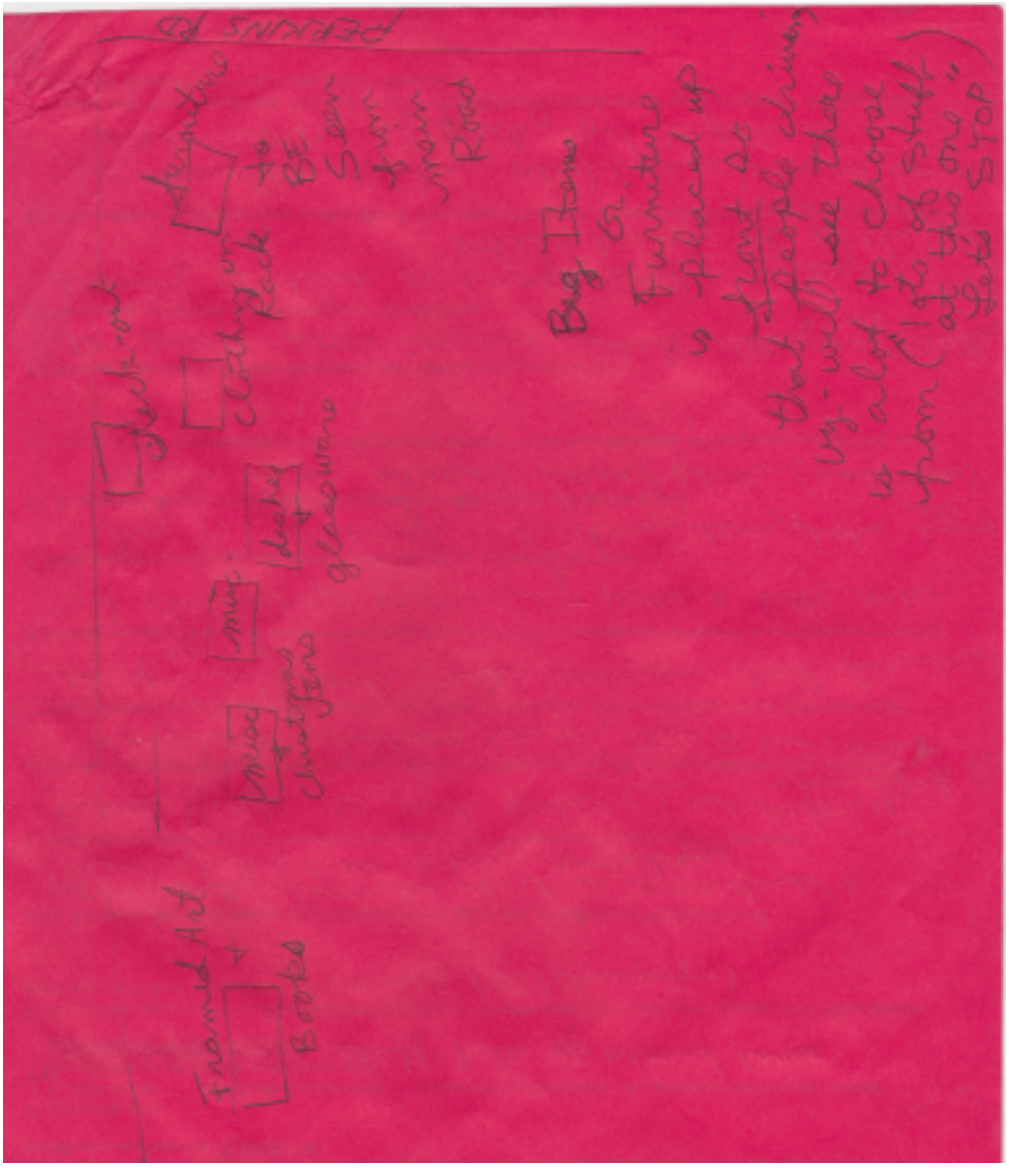

Figure 4.28. Perkins Rd

In regard to more permanent structures, the map in Figure 4.29 includes an element of the built environment by labeling the representative symbol "House." No items for sale are labeled; they are merely represented by squares and rectangles, making the house more *marked*.

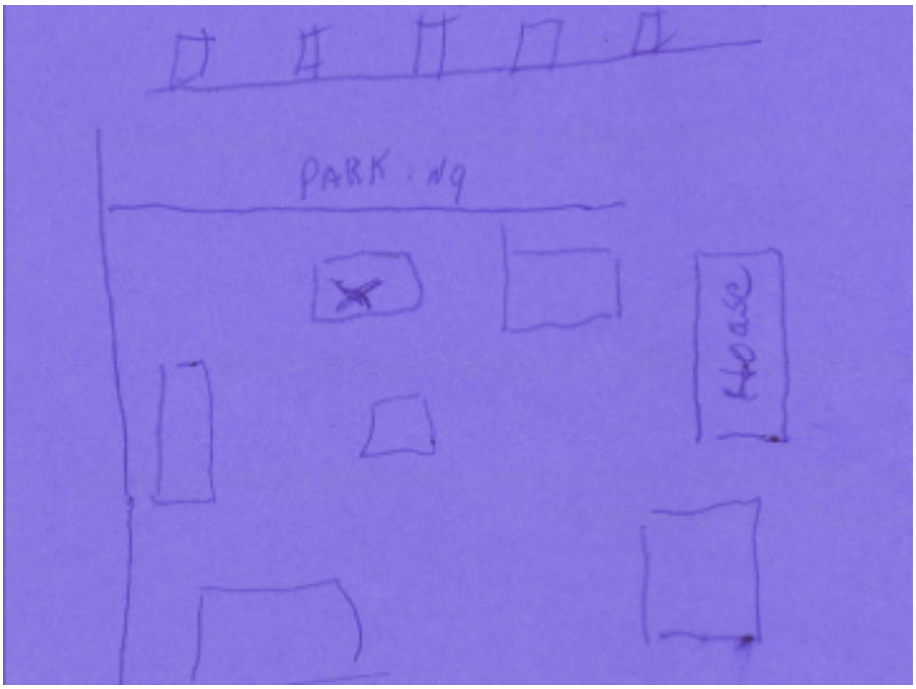

Figure 4.29. House

Maps containing evidence of buildings, represented both through symbol and text, include Figure 4.30's "Building," Figure 4.31's "back building," and Figure 4.14's "Building." There are two maps that depict unlabeled structures —those in Figures 4.8 and 4.3. The final map with a structure, Figure 4.32, has a labeled garage and states parenthetically, "some items for sale in garage." Figure 4.22 contains "Dirty House" as a label and may have been included because its "dirty" state called attention to it for the mapmaker, as it was not the house holding the sale, but was across the street.

While some of the sales I attended did not take place near a building of some sort, the majority did. Perhaps many participants did not contextualize the fleeting sales in relation to more permanent structures. I offer as another possibility for their exclusions from maps that homes and other buildings are naturalized or implied settings and contexts for yard sales. Another possibility is the way in which I solicited the maps, which was largely left open to the participant's subjective interpretation of what constitutes a map.

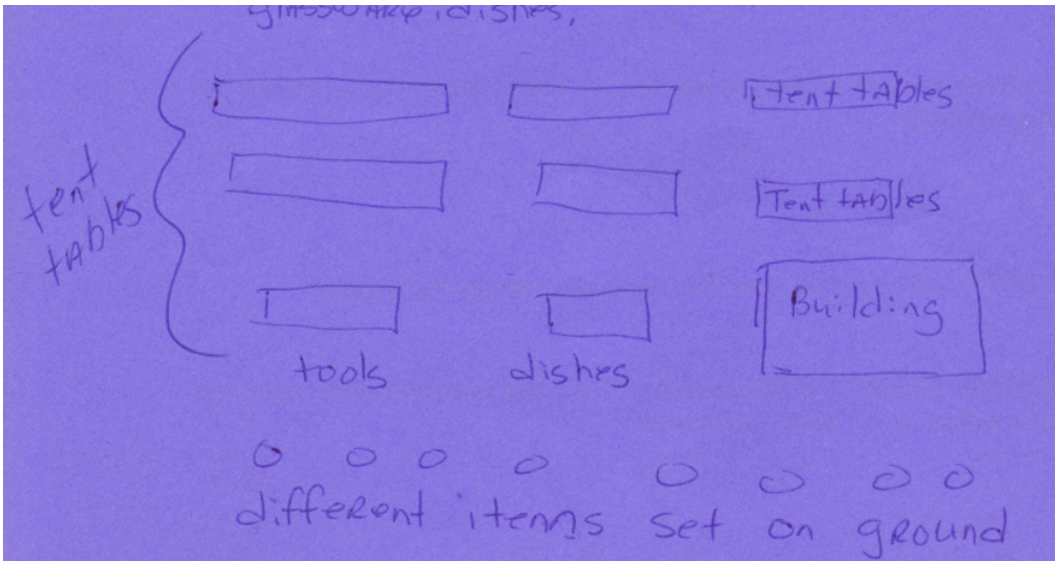

Figure 4.30. Building

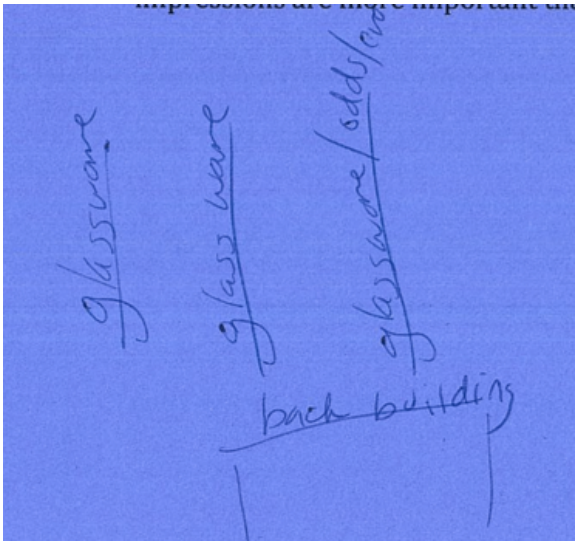

Figure 4.31. Back building

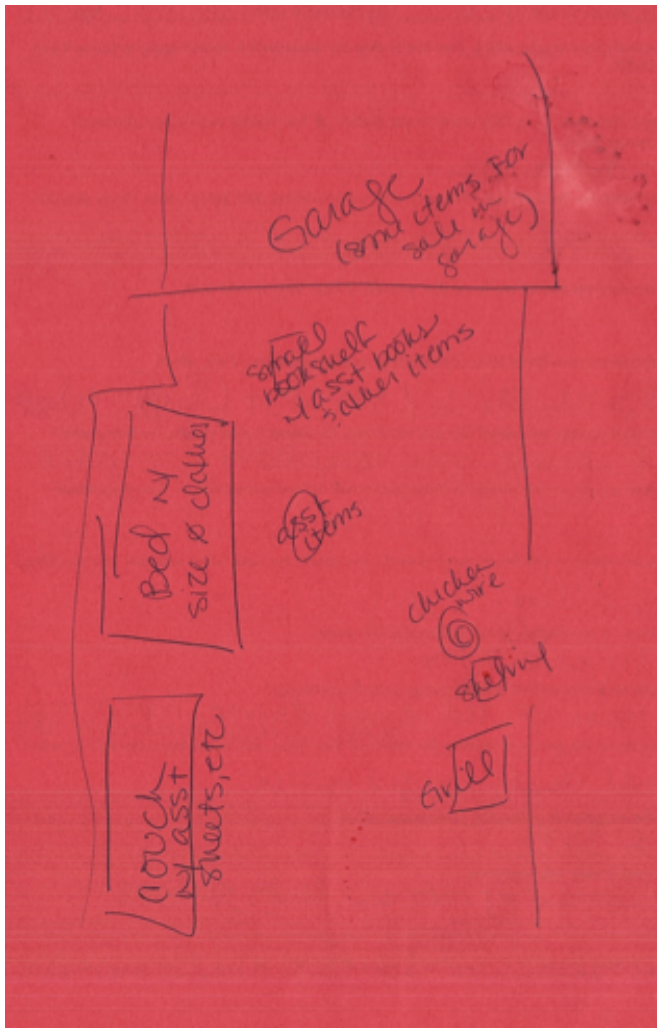

Figure 4.32. Garage

Very few ecological elements made an appearance on most mental maps. When trees are present on the maps, they are merely represented by circles, such as in Figures 4.9 and 4.23, the former of which also bears the label "tree." Figure 4.23 contains a pictorial representation of a tree, with no label, whereas Figure 4.2 features the word "tree" but no accompanying symbol. The only other representation of nature is Figure 4.33, on which "rocks" and "flowers" are textually represented.

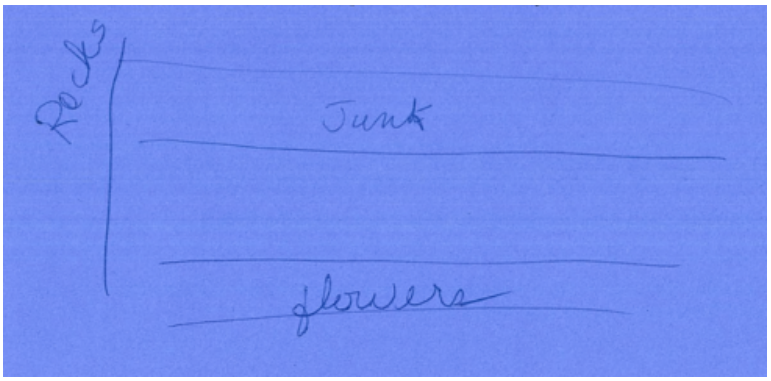

Figure 4.33. Rocks and flowers

Figure 4.22 includes "Mean dogs," "Barking dogs," and "dog." This is the only map to include animals of any kind, yet many horses, goats, pigs, and chickens were either for sale or in very close proximity to sales, as were household pets. None of the maps held any representations of the yard or earth on which they were taking place—again, perhaps because such components are assumed to be there and have been absorbed as a naturalized background.

Ironically, only one map, Figure 4.32, contained a representation of a garage, while none of the maps alluded to the presence of a yard. (However, Figures 4.1 and 4.30 indicated the presence of the "ground" through text.) Even so, the maps may not explicitly indicate what they are maps of—yard and garage sales—because not one single map bears the label "yard sale," "garage sale," or a similar term.

4.5 Telling Small Stories

The mental maps I collected of yard sales tell small stories (see Lorimer, 2003a). Turchi (2004) discusses the map as a metaphor for telling stories. According to Turchi, "We organize information on maps in order to see our knowledge in a new way … as a result, maps suggest explanations; and while explanations reassure us, they also inspire us to ask more questions, consider other possibilities" (p. 11).

Continuing the metaphor of map as storytelling, Turchi notes:

> The need for selection means that every story contains, and is surrounded by, blank spaces, some more significant than others. When we create a fictional world, our decisions include geography, or setting, but also where and when a narrative begins and ends, who it involves or who it doesn't, which actions and conversations are deemed worthy of inclusion and which aren't. (p. 42)

These mapped stories, just as with written or oral stories, are hemmed in by the page, color, ink, language, etc., as well as being confined by various other factors. The mapmakers' choices and selections of what to include or exclude from the maps, and how to represent their unique knowledge on the page, allows the map-reader to imagine and interpret cultural and spatial understandings of the environment being transferred from the brain to paper.

Figure 4.34 has a textual explanation of the spatial layout of the yard sale. The mapmaker in this case thought out how he wanted the reader to understand the map, even imagining a desired response to the spatial configuration of the sale depicted. Next to the symbol showing where the "furniture" was positioned, there was a purpose expressed: "to be seen from main road." The text below that phrase explains, "Big items or furniture is placed up front so that people driving by will see there is a lot to choose from." The mapmaker then includes, parenthetically, an imagined or desired reaction by the aforementioned drivers: "lots of stuff at this one, Let's STOP." The map contains an imagined narrative or scenario, which is telling its maker's grasp of what is important in holding a yard sale—lots of variety and big enough things, such as furniture, to catch the eyes of passersby.

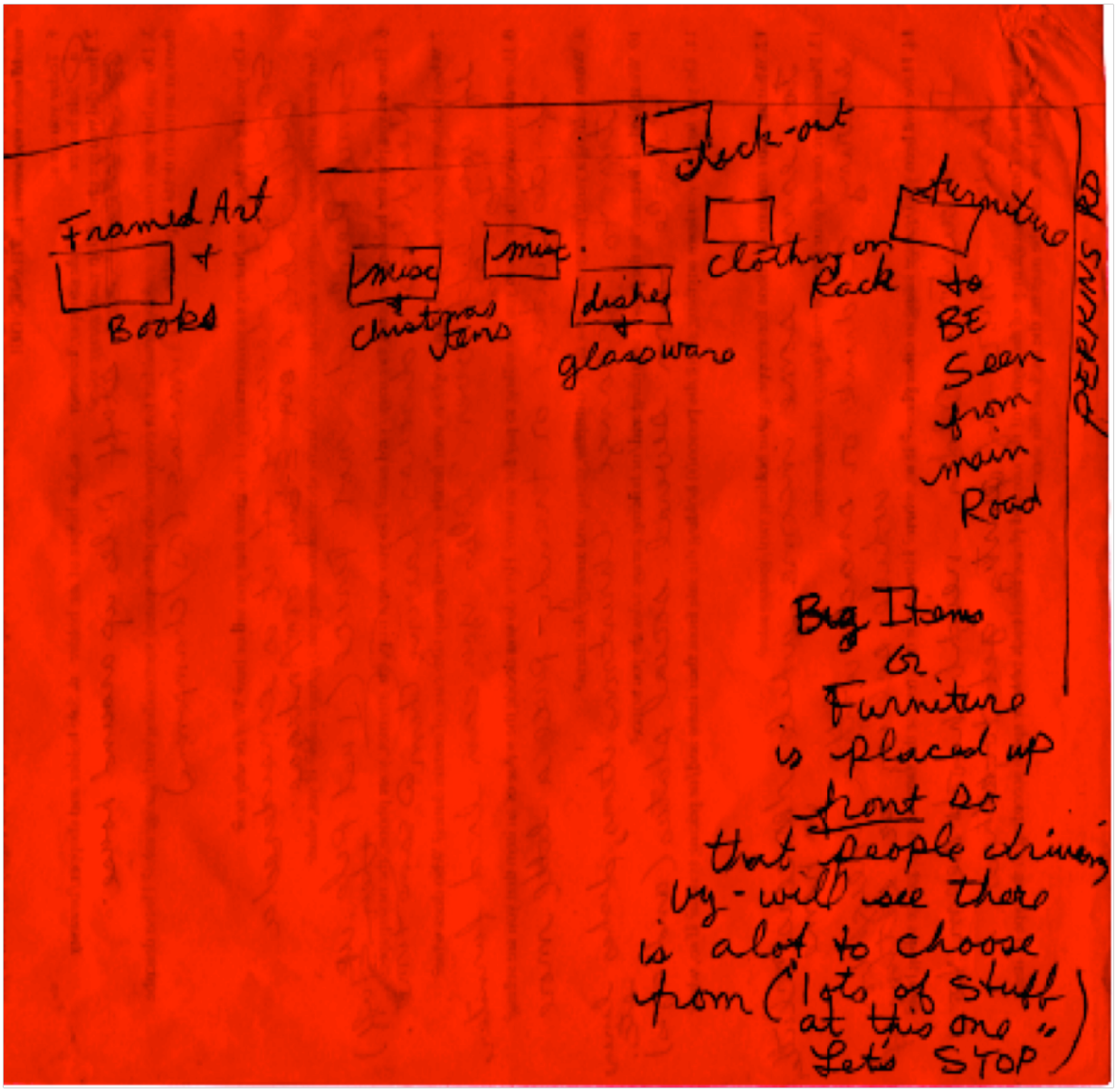

Figure 4.34.A Let's STOP[41]

[41] See Figure 4.28 for original map without color modification.

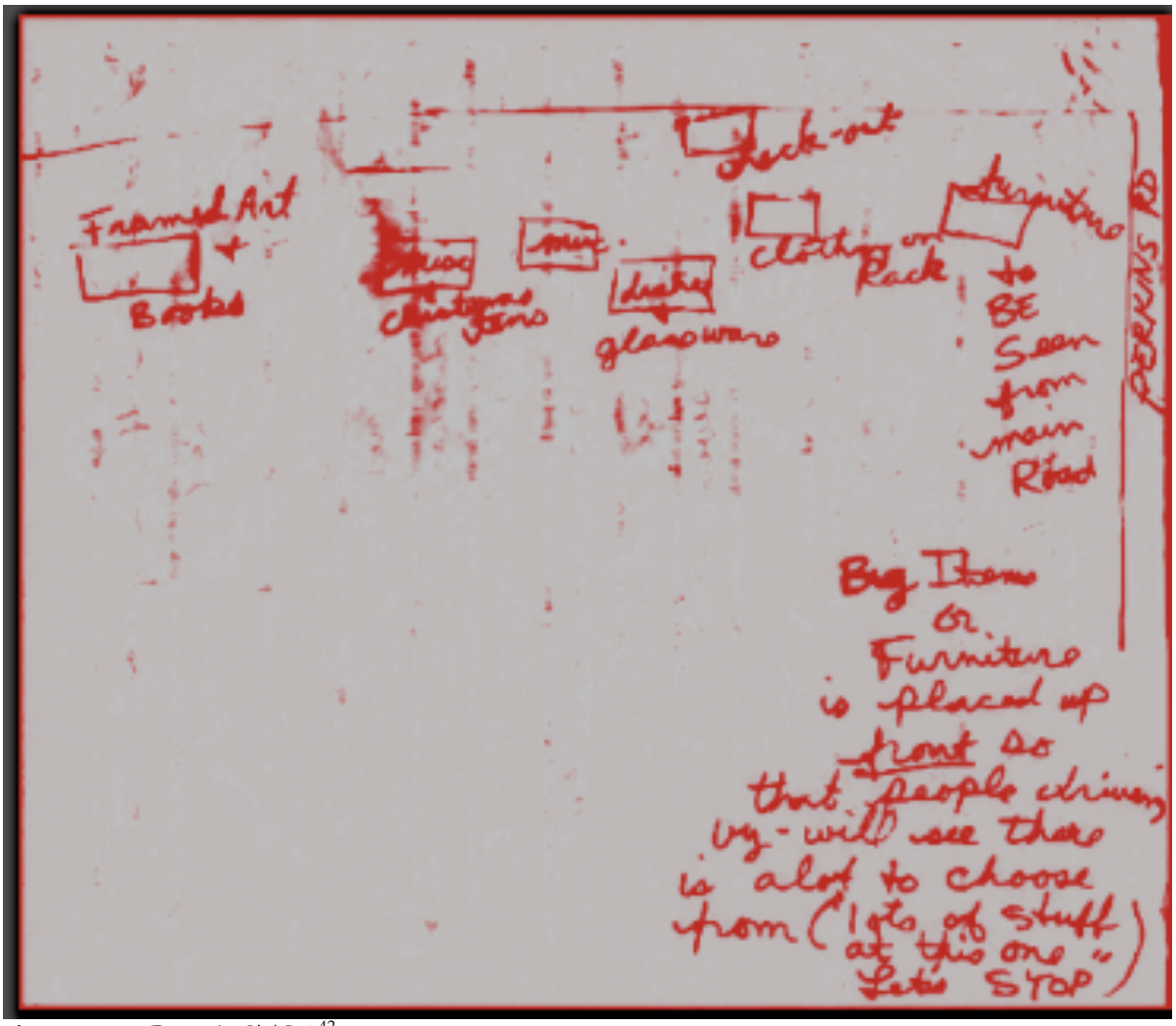

Figure 4.34. B Let's STOP[42]

Not only do mental maps tell stories, they provide the opportunity for readers of the maps to imagine and create stories. Figure 4.23 contains the text "Crazy Indian Man," which inspires the map-reader to ask more questions. How did this man make it to the map? What story is being told by his presence? Why is he labeled as crazy? Are the attributes crazy, Indian, and man necessarily observable? Does the mapmaker perhaps know this man, and what might their relationship be, if any? Again, an integration of interviews during the mental-map collection would have provided other layers of meaning.

[42] This map is the same as Figure 34.A, but can be read if printed in black and white. See Figure 4.28 for original map without color modification.

Other items on several maps afforded me the opportunity to create stories, such as the "Jesus Bus" in Figure 4.35.

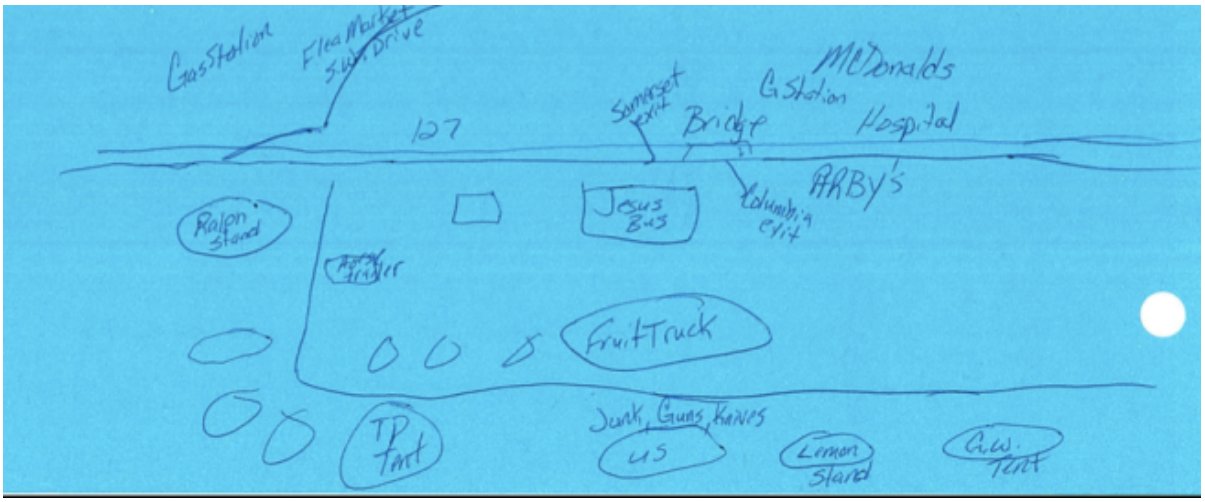

Figure 4.35. Jesus Bus

The map in Figure 4.36 reveals the maker's exotification of products made or production methods used by cultures different from the maker or his or her community, therefore revealing a bias, or personal preference, for items such as Amish furniture, which is typically made without the use of electricity. This also highlights information not provided on these mental maps. I did not come across any yard sales or representations of them that contained a category for things "made in China." The absence of such categorization may reveal cultural attitudes about a tendency to assign higher value to things that are not mass-produced, with exceptions, of course, such as fads of the past, like Beanie Babies.

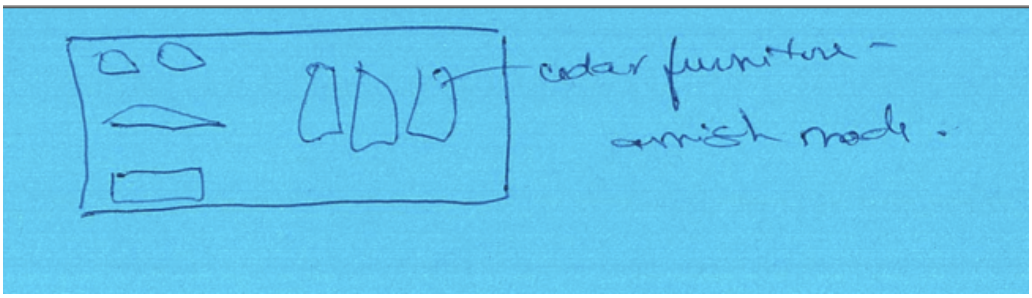

Figure 4.36. Cedar furniture, Amish made

Other text, seemingly irrelevant to a mental map of a yard sale, tells a small story of fan support for the University of Alabama: In Figure 4.19, the map shouts at the reader from the page—with all-capital letters and three exclamation points—"ROLL TIDE!!!" This text is located slightly up and to the right in relation to the other items on the map, whereas Figure 17 contains the text "Roll Tide Roll!" and a smiley face, both of which are integrated spatially into the map with items above and beside this exclamation.

4.6 Conclusion

Just as each story is unique, "the mental map of each person is unique" (Gould and White, 1974, p. 51) and reveals a personal understanding of the maker's value system and way of perceiving a particular place or space at a particular time. Katharine Harmon (2004) suggests that "part of what fascinates us when looking at a map is inhabiting the mind of its maker, considering that particular terrain of imagination overlaid with those unique contour lines of experience" (p. 11). I was able to make attempts at understanding what the makers might have intended, overlaying the maps with meaning from my research and lived experiences.

Through analyzing the mental maps, I examined how participants perceived the spaces and their boundaries, how they understood value, how they imagined categories and labels, and how landscapes of these yard sales were contextualized. Additionally, I reflected on what I considered to fall within the map category, ultimately concluding that text is a map and all maps are mental maps (see Axelsen and Jones, 1987, and Harmon, 2004). As mentioned in the methods section of Chapter 1, I would be able to provide more and different analysis of these maps had I conducted interviews with the mapmakers. Additionally, I could have asked the participants to contextualize the maps in the neighborhoods or communities in which the sales took place.

These maps revealed cultural attitudes, spatial hierarchies, and stories, however small. I bear in mind that the maps I collected certainly came from the imaginations of the participants and, as Harmon (2004) points out, "These are maps of the imagination, as all maps are" (p. 11). During my interaction with the maps, I kept in mind that "every map is a reflection of the individual or group that creates it" and that "by 'reading' a map, by studying it, we share, however temporarily, those beliefs" (Turchi, p. 146). I was connected to the makers through the acts of soliciting and viewing their visual cartographic representations.

Not only are we connected to the makers, but as Downs and Stea (1977) suggest, "we do become emotionally attached to these identifying labels" (p. 43), because "cognitive maps serve as coathangers [*sic*] for assorted memories" (p. 27). These memories inform our way of moving through space and teeter in tension with how we perceive ourselves within space and place, and how we visually and symbolically represent our understandings of the worlds within, without, and between us.

Through what is present and absent on the maps, my analysis shows what some people were potentially seeking and what people tended to naturalize. This chapter demonstrated that mental maps show people's biases and spatial understandings of American garage sales through the use of labels, which reveal categorization systems and preferences. In the next chapter, the conclusion, I offer these categories and spatial layouts as ephemeral archives of ridded things.

5. CONCLUSION: EPHEMERAL ARCHIVES

As I have shown in the previous chapters, American garage sales are socio-spatial events that depend on the acts of ridding and consuming in order to exist. The sales contain opportunities to encounter others—human and nonhuman—as well as perform multiple expressions of the self and challenge social constructs and (re)produce them. I have also made the case that American garage sales are ever-changing, never exactly reproduced, ephemeral sites where materiality, performance, and storytelling converge. In this final chapter I build on the critiques and suggestions of others' work about archives in order to link American yard sales and archives. Finally, I discuss the contributions this thesis makes to geography. But first I will revisit important themes from my chapters containing empirical data, beginning with Chapter 2.

I explored the various ideas of *home* in Chapter 2. I noted the importance of their spatial hybridization and liminality (on the thresholds of public and private), which allow for glimpses into the domestic lives of others through consumption and ridding. I used empirical data from narrative surveys, formal and informal interviews, photographs, classified advertisements, and participant observation in this chapter. I showed how these social events, rooted in consumption and ridding, require acts of sorting and notions of personal taste. These acts, related to memory and identity, often result in storytelling. Chapter 2 illustrated the attachments we have to things for a variety of reasons. For example, Elanore's stuffed animal acted as an aide-mémoire, bringing forth memories of her student, the context of how the stuffed bear came to be hers, and how she felt about it. The presence of the bear occupying space in her home connected her to her past. It also connected her to the imagined future through emotion. She wanted to imagine someone buying it who would protect it, as opposed to someone who would give it to a dog as a toy.

In Chapter 3, I discussed how economic liminality (between first-cycle consumption and the trash dump) provided for multiple value-determination systems, which were in dialogue with

mainstream economies but opened more space for emotion, nostalgia, and other extraeconomical factors. I utilized my experiences from participation, responses from narrative surveys, and quotations from interviews to examine this use of personal value-determination systems as exemplifying one way in which self-expression surfaces. This chapter also illustrated that American yard sales allow for the encounter of others for and chance. Through encountering difference, participants were able to challenge and/or reproduce dominant social hierarchies. As the chapter revealed, the acknowledgement of the class diversity of participants by the participants themselves challenged the widely held belief that only those who are poor shop at yard sales.

Chapter 4, through analysis of mental maps as visual representations of yard-sale events and spaces, revealed personal biases, small stories of attendees, and categorization systems. For example, categorizing things in the yard sale based on the rooms of the house from which they came produces a representation of the inside layout of the home in a liminal space, such as the yard. Other mental maps reflected personal-value systems through categorizing some things as "antiques" and other things as "junk." I used the presence of map components to analyze absence on other maps, such as why the fact that strikingly few of the maps depicted people. I analyzed the mental maps as metaphors for storytelling and the use of the mapmakers' imaginations to cartographically represent these stories.

In consideration of the empirical data in this thesis, as its conclusion, I propose a linkage by drawing a parallel between conventional archives—with their archivists and somewhat standardized organization practices—and American garage sales, whose unconventional curators organize items according to personal categorizations. I conclude, in consideration of the empirical data and literature engaged in this thesis, that American garage sales are indeed sites on the threshold of consuming and ridding practices associated with memory, place, identity, and materiality, which cumulatively I view as archives—albeit archives that are fleeting and on the margins. The parallel

comes up short because the material items and documents in conventional archives are indeed actively and purposefully retained and stored, whereas the items in American garage sales are in a sort of limbo—not in the trash, but no longer allowed to take up space in their owners' homes.

Although traditional archives contain, retain, and preserve important and useful collections that represent various places, spaces, events, and lives, they privilege fixity and purposeful retention over performance and ephemerality (see Cook and Schwartz, 2002, and Lorimer, 2010). Here I argue that cultural and historical geographers can embrace the material items (and their associated stories and performances), which occupy a space between purposeful retention and garbage, as worthy of study. In order to make this case, I first address the need for such a reconfiguration of archives by building on literature tracing and problematizing traditional archives. Here I am suggesting that questioning our understandings of archives as places and abstractions is useful. For example, American yard sales are archives of things and stuff associated with the holders, as well as archives of trends or fads regarding any number of aspects relating to material culture. What is useful about my re-conception of archives lies in the inclusion of examining ridded things in research; it lies in looking beyond only researching that which is saved.

5.1 Tracing and Problematizing Archives

From whence does the word *archive* come? Philosopher Jacques Derrida (1996) traces the etymology to the Ancient Greek term *archeion*—the house of the *archon*. Derrida explains the meaning of *archeion* as a *home* in which important documents were kept and preserved by the *archon,* who was a governmental magistrate charged with record keeping.[43]

The etymology of the word *archive* may reveal some problems in and of itself, but Derrida's writings surrounding poststructuralism and the archive, as well as Michel Foucault's critiques of the archive (see Foucault, 1972), have been catalysts for deconstructing the archive as well as a move

[43] I am making a linguistic connection between the word in English, *archive* and its spatially domestic origins in Ancient Greek.

toward "postcustodial" archival approaches (Hamilton, 2002, p. 10). Derrida's deconstruction has spurred a plethora of possibilities for archival discourse. Critical work concerning archives and archival work in other disciplines (see Hamilton, Harris, Taylor, Pickover, Reid, and Saleh, 2002) and in geography (see Withers, 2002; Holdsworth, 2003; DeSilvey, 2007; and Lorimer, 2010) asks us to reimagine, refigure (see Steedman and Rutgers, 2002), reanimate, retheorize, and reconceptualize many aspects of archives (see Manoff, 2004 and Clarke, 2004). As active repositories and (re)producers of culture and history (see Brown and Davis-Brown, 2008) that are also sites of power (see Rose, 2000, Booth, 2006, and Schein, 2006), critics have problematized archives in relation to access (see Myerson, 1998, and Lynch, 1999), artifact and document valuation (see DeLyser et al, 2004), selection and exclusion (see Trouillot, 1997), memory and identity production (see De Kock, 1994, Steedman, 1998, and Burton, 2008), location (see Turkel, 2006), seduction (see Bradley, 1999), interpretation, practice, and organization (see Gagen, Lorimer, and Vasudevan, 2007; Kirsch and Rohan, 2008; Stoler, 2010). I acknowledge this critical literature and build upon it by suggesting materially, spatially, and theoretically reaching farther and further to things that are ridded in spaces that are liminal. The aforementioned work informs my ability to approach understanding (American) culture through ridding, in particular understanding the collections of ridded materials in yard sales as ephemeral archives with "data," which exists in a purgatory.

5.2 Geography and Archives

With the advent of technology, geographers have already written about the importance of looking to virtual spaces and things-in-motion as research tools and resources. DeLyser, Andrew Curtis, and Rebecca Sheehan (2004) have located one informal archive that concerns material objects and space—the auction website eBay. They discuss it as a tool and network that brought with it new research possibilities for historical geographers.

New possibilities also come to the fore in Caitlin DeSilvey's research (2007), which questions

what happens when we meet things where they are in order to understand their contexts, as well as what kind of knowledge these things and contexts create. DeSilvey, by looking to other places and things as sources in her work on a Montana homestead, raised concerns about the effectiveness of traditional curatorial practices in dealing with the organization and collection of residual material culture (objects in various stages of decay). She showed the importance of not only examining things that are, in a sense, assumed to be of value in the telling of historical and cultural stories because of their purposeful retention, but also "ambiguous or degraded matter" (p. 878), matter that was not actively preserved. DeSilvey sought to understand "a way to approach these excluded objects on their own terms, what kind of curatorial practice might let us see these things clearly, and what might this practice tells us about the relationship between site and significance, place, and the production of knowledge" (p. 878). Her work suggests pushing the boundaries of what may reveal valuable qualitative information and how *where* this information is revealed bears note.

Research by DeSilvey (2006 and 2007) exemplifies Lorimer's (2010) suggestion that "the very idea of the archive—its origins, scope, layout, composition, content, and treatment—has been stirred up and shaken, and in the process, the status of the information it holds, been rendered more provisional, indeterminate, and contestable" (p. 253). Since the archive has been "stirred up and shaken," Lorimer (2010) is able to propose that "though the source material for much historical research remains squarely located in the great national archives of the world, a vein of inquiry finds its home in family archives, lodged in out-of-the-way places and according to private conditions of storage and unexpected forms of cataloguing and display" (p. 264), because "in a domestic setting, archival research can unfold a wholly different kind of undertaking … when consulted in the company of a family member-cum-host-cum-curator, and interleaved with reminiscence, archival materials play with the appearance of historical events, and alter the eventual conditions of its narration" (p. 264). This proposition reiterates the importance of *where*, but also recognizes that *who*

is there matters. Additionally, Lorimer (2010) suggests that "cultural by-products, junk, ephemera, and leftovers, become a treasure trove and staple resource" (p. 259) and beckons the reader to "consider this … a creative form of cultural recycling … reclamation and accumulation by other, less wasteful means" (p. 259). Not only do the *where* and *who* of archival research matter, but also the *what*.

The literature I have engaged calls for a refiguring of archives. The work of DeLyser, Curtis, and Sheehan (2004), along with DeSilvey's (2007), highlights the willingness of geographers to step outside of the traditional archive and embrace new venues for geographical inquiry. Lorimer's (2010) work calls forth the potential of looking to other resources in other places with the potential for different kinds of curators. It is precisely this sense of untapped potentiality upon which I built by examining garage sales as a new possibility for archival geographic research. This thesis illustrated that American garage sales, like eBay in the early 2000s, provide geographers with opportunities to see beyond traditional archives.

By building on the works of others, I suggest pushing notions of the conventional archive a bit further. Not only do we need to include preserved, "important" documents in our research, and contemplate those things and documents that were deemed "garbage," but also those that were ridded in physical, narrative, and/or performative acts. This suggestion requires turning the traditional archive on its head[44] because it calls for paying attention to things and identities being ridded, which are essentially antithetical to those things in traditional archives—things that are kept.

The etymological analysis of *archive* by Derrida nicely exemplifies a linguistic and spatial link between archives and domestic spaces. So too is Lorimer's (2010) suggestion a necessary idea for this research, because it shows geography's interest in family archives and personal categorization

[44] I acknowledge Dydia DeLyser for the phrase "turning the archive on its head" in personal communication from 2011, April 21.

systems found in domestic places. Lorimer suggests we look at what is kept and/or displayed in homes, but not what is ridded from homes.

Revisiting the inclusion of domestic spaces, in regard to what is ridded from them, in our understandings of archives will provide different interactions and information than do traditional archives. I propose that expanding what we consider to be informative and where we look for understandings will help to create new and interesting ways of viewing the past, present, and future in geography. Another way to expand the ways in which we think of and use archives is consideration of ephemerality, particularly in regard to performance (Biddick, 2009).

5.3 Geography and Performance: (Re)Figuring American Garage Sales as Ephemeral Archives

Geographical work about car-boot sales (see Crewe, Brooks, and Gregson, 1997, Crewe, 1998a and 1998b), which share similarities with American garage sales (see Herrmann, 1997 and 2004), suggests that the car-boot sale phenomenon has a "transitory, temporary, and above all performative character" (Gregson and Rose, 2000, p. 442). These ephemeral and performative qualities articulated by Gregson and Rose intersect with Stuart Hall's (2001) suggestion of a " 'living archive,' whose construction is an on-going, never completed project" (p. 89). This nods to the ephemeral qualities of performance and makes room for examining a "living archive" through the incorporation of performance.

Here, performance scholar Diana Taylor (2003) asks interesting questions—questions geographers too can contemplate:

> If … we were to reorient the ways social memory and cultural identity in the Americas have traditionally been studied, with the disciplinary emphasis on literary and historical documents, and look through the lens of the performed, embodied behaviors, what would we know that we do not know now? Whose stories, memories, and struggles might become visible? What tensions might performance behaviors show what would not be recognized in texts and documents? (p. xviii)

These questions and Taylor's (2003) understanding of the traditional archive lead her to put forth the idea of the repertoire, which provides room for the ephemerality of performance and embodied knowledge. This thesis sought to consider Taylor's above questions by examining what was revealed through the intertwining of cultural, historical, material, social, and performative processes in operation at American garage sales, because "performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity" (p. 3). Taylor's archive and repertoire exist on a continuum,[45] not oppositionally. My work revealed that local, personal, and social knowledge, memories and attitudes, as well as situated knowledges, are (per)formed and expressed at American garage sales, falling on this continuum, containing components of both the archive and the repertoire.

Due to the aforementioned and because American garage sales include snippets of conversations, performances of negotiation and identity, material objects, and frictions I am interested in what is possible. When I attended the yard sale of my former partner in the anecdote that opened this thesis, the hammock and other objects forced me to remember the relationships I had to those things, their former contexts, and how I placed value on them, as well as to re-contextualize them in the present. The ridding of these material things allowed my ex-partner to create symbolic distance between present and past identities. By reacquiring the hammock, I brought a different past closer again. Garage sales provide spaces where people, material items, and performance converge, which results in interactions that transmit different kinds of knowledge. I have demonstrated in the previous chapters that yard sales, as events and spaces, contain opportunities to engage with people and things, thereby providing opportunities to learn about how we perform ourselves, our memories, and knowledges through consuming and ridding things.

[45] I acknowledge Lauren Coats for this idea, which came about on May 17th, 2011 during my thesis defense.

In this thesis, I asked questions about those things that were categorized as "get-rid-able," moving beyond only inquiring of items deemed important by dint of their purposeful retention. Garage sales have the ability to be utilized as accessible archives that hold stories, artifacts, and performances of a distant or near past. This unconventional and widely accessible archive created through consumption and ridding gives geographers an innovative lens through which to explore the intricacies of place, identity, and culture.

This project sought to open conceptual and physical spaces of how we as geographers look at and for ways of knowing and remembering, as well as how feelings and emotions are embedded in and inscribed on things and everyday spatial practices. The importance of expanding where we look lies in the notion of openings. In the pages of this thesis, I have shown how American yard sales provide opportunities for qualitative research that looks in between spatial and metaphorical openings—openings between public and private; openings between the self and *others*; openings between various value-determination systems; openings between keeping material objects and deeming them garbage; openings for chance and encounter; openings between materiality, discourse, and performance; openings between minds, maps, and imaginations; and openings between presence and absence. Within these openings, we can glimpse various transitions in these ephemeral relationships.

As researchers we can include resources that are ridded and located in the margins—those places where we do not typically look. Part of turning the traditional archive on its head requires a blurring of lines between *field* and *archive*. American garage sales exemplify archive as field and field as archive. By looking to the blurred thresholds of field and archive, I am able to suggest liminal, ephemeral spaces—American garage sales—as collections of ridded material items. A participant on the World's Longest Yard Sale wrote on his narrative survey that he participates in yard sales

because "we live in a used world." This work shows that the used worlds of American garage sales can influence how we as geographers can seek to understand this used world.

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APPENDIX A: NARRATIVE SURVEYS

Garage Sale Narrative Survey (Baton Rouge)

Gender: _____ Date _____Race/Ethnicity_____City/State(in now)_____Age_____

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Feel free to skip any question if it doesn't apply to you or if you would rather not answer it. THANK YOU!

1. Today you are a:

   a. Sale holder **b**. Sale shopper/browse **c**. Sale helper of the holder **d.** Sale holder and shopper/browser

2. How did you get involved in yard/garage sales?

3. Do you have any rituals (i.e. making breakfast for everyone who participates) surrounding yard/garage sales? Please describe them in as much detail as possible.

4. Do you like to discuss the history or sentimentality of the items that you sell or buy? Why or why not?

5. Are there any stigmas (negative associations) you know about surrounding yard/garage sales? If yes, what?

6. How do you plan for holding or going to garage/yard sales? Do you use a map, the internet, your phone, the newspaper?

7. When holding a garage sale, do certain people in your family or friend group take care of certain duties? Who does what?

8. How do you decide how much you are willing to pay for an item? How do you decide the value of an item that you are selling?

9. When holding a yard/garage sale, how do you display, group and arrange the items?

10. What kind of diversity in the people attending and/or holding garage sales do you notice?

11. Do you feel like you learn anything about the person(s) holding the sale from their items and/or pricing system? If so what?

12. What are your main motivations for shopping at or holding yard/garage sales?

13. Please share one of your favorite yard/garage sale memories.

14. Have you been yard/garage saling in other places? If so, where? How was it different or the same as yard/garage saling here?

15. Mental Map: Draw a map of the yard sale and space you are in currently. There are no "right" or "wrong" maps. Please use the back of this sheet.

World's Longest Yard Sale Narrative Survey Gender: F M Other
Date _____ Race/Ethnicity _____
City/State_____ Age _____

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Feel free to skip any question if it doesn't apply to you or if you would rather not answer it.

1. How did you get involved in yard/garage sales?

2. Was there a friend or family member who inspired you to start going to or holding yard sales? If yes, who?

3. Do you have any rituals (i.e. making breakfast for everyone who participates) surrounding yard/garage sales? Please describe them in as much detail as possible.

4. Do you look for items only for yourself when shopping at garage sales, or do you look for others as well?

5. Do you like to discuss the history or sentimentality of the items that you sell or buy?

6. Are there any stigmas you know about surrounding yard/garage sales? If yes, what?

7. Are there certain things you absolutely will not buy at a garage sale? If so, what?

8. When holding a garage sale, do certain people in your family or friend group take care of certain duties? Who does what?

9. How do you decide how much you are willing to pay for an item? How do you decide the value of an item that you are selling?

10. When holding a yard/garage sale, how do you display and arrange the items?

11. As a garage sale holder, what are some of the questions you get asked most frequently beyond "does it work?" "how much is it?" and "what is it?"

12. What do you do with the items that are not sold after the sale?

13. What do you typically do with the items you buy at yard/garage sales?

a. use them myself b. give them to a friend or family member c. sell them

d. donate them e. other_____

14. Please share one of your favorite yard/garage sale memories.

15. Mental Map: Draw a map of the yard sale and space you are in currently. There are no "right" or "wrong" maps. Please use the space at the bottom of this sheet.

APPENDIX B: MENTAL MAP

Mental Map Gender: F M Race/Ethnicity _____ Age_____

Date_____ City_____State_____

Mental Map: Draw a map of the yard sale and space you are in currently. There are no "right" or "wrong" maps. Please use the space at the bottom of this sheet.

A

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

– Applicant,Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee c an be found at http://www.lsu.edu/screeningmembers.shtml

– A Complete Application includes All of the Following:

(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.

(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)

(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.

*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.

(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)

(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php.)

1) Principal Investigator: Gentry Hanks* **Ph:** 225-284-5581 **Rank** Graduate Student

Dept: Geography and Anthr **Ph:** 225-578-5942 **E-mail:** ghanks3@tigers.lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

*Graduate student of Dr. Dydia DeLyser in Geography and Anthropology, 578-5942

E4977
IRB# LSU Proposal #
Complete Application
Human Subjects Training

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 3-4-2013

3) Project Title: The American Garage Sale

4) Proposal? (yes or no) NO **If Yes, LSU Proposal Number**

Also, If YES, either ◯ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
OR ◯ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students) Garage Sale participants aged 18 and older

*Circle any **"vulnerable populations" to be used:** (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature **Date** 03.05.2010 (no per signatures)

**** I certify my responses are accurate and complete.** If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted X Not Exempted Category/Paragraph

Reviewer BEGGS **Signature** **Date** 3/5/10

Part 1: Determination of "Research" and Potential For Risk

- This section determines whether the project meets the Department of Health and Human Services (HSS) definition of research involving human subjects, and if not, whether it nevertheless presents more than "minimal risk" to human subjects that makes IRB review prudent and necessary.

D

Gentry Hanks

Consent Script – Garage Sale Participants

"This brief interview is part of a research project that has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Louisiana State University. This study has been approved by the IRB at LSU. For questions or concerns about participants' rights, please contact the IRB chair, Dr. Robert Mathews, (225)578-8692 or irb@lsu.edu. This interview is optional and you can choose to participate or not. The questions I will ask you are intended to aid in my understanding of perceptions of and the relationships between people and material items, storytelling, as well as shopping/selling as practices and performances at garage sales. The interview will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. You choose which questions you want to answer and are not obligated to answer all of them. You can terminate the interview at any time without consequence.

"Can I ask you a few questions?" (If "Yes" proceed to next question)
"Are you an adult age 18 or over?" (If "Yes" proceed with brief interview)
If "No" is answered to either question, I will say, "Have a nice day and thank you for your time."

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 3-4-2013

VITA

Gentry Powell Hanks earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Louisiana State University in 2003. She majored in Latin and minored in Italian. During her undergraduate studies, Hanks went to Italy for a summer semester abroad in Catania, Sicily. She also studied at Universiteit Utrecht in the Netherlands for one year abroad.

After graduation from Louisiana State University, Hanks moved to El Salvador to teach English as a second language until 2004. During 2004 and 2005 Gentry taught English as a second language in Gunmaken, Japan. Upon returning from Japan, Gentry taught Advanced Placement Latin, Latin I, and Latin II at Episcopal High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana as well as English III at Baker High School in Baker, Louisiana. From 2006-2009 Hanks taught Spanish I, II, and III at West Feliciana High School in St. Francisville, Louisiana. In 2007 Hanks implemented the first Latin program at West Feliciana High School, where she also taught Latin I and II. Hanks is highly certified by the Louisiana Board of Education to teach K-12 Spanish and Latin.

During her master's studies in geography at Louisiana State University, Hanks was awarded an assistantship with Communication Across the Curriculum in the Basic Sciences Studio, a research assistantship through the National Park Service, the William Haag paper award, the Pruitt travel grant, and a campus-wide award— Louisiana State University's Graduate Student Leader of the Year. In 2010, Hanks (and jenny hay) applied for and were award a Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities Public Outreach Grant, which was used to build the Fletcher Adams and 357th Fighter Group Museum in Ida, Louisiana. Her Master of Arts degree will be conferred in August 2011.